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THE OLD RÉGIME

COURT, SALONS AND THEATRES

VOLUME II.

LADY JACKSON'S WORKS.

14 VOLUMES.

OLD PARIS. Its Court and Literary Salons. 2 vols.

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JOSEPH KNIGHT COMPANY, Publishers,

BOSTON, MASS.

Marie Antoinette

THE

OLD RÉGIME

COURT, SALONS, AND THEATRES

BY

CATHERINE CHARLOTTE, LADY JACKSON

" Il est des époques où la société ressemble au festin de Balthazar. Elle s'enivre jusqu'au reveil terrible, fatal comme les lettres de feu sur les murs d'airain."

CAPEFIGUE.

IN TWO VOLUMES

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THE OLD RÉGIME

COURT, SALONS AND THEATRES

CHAPTER I.

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DURING the ministry of Cardinal Fleury, economy was the order of the day in the royal household. The needs of the state, and the financial embarrassments resulting from the "Système Law," had made retrenchment an absolute necessity, and the simple tastes and domestic habits of both king and queen had enabled them readily to conform to it. Many of the *haute noblesse*, whose fortunes had suffered from the speculative mania, had been glad to avail themselves of the example of royalty, and, by curtailing

superfluities, in some measure to retrieve their losses.

But very shortly after the death of the cardinal, a great and general development of luxury took place in the style of living, both amongst the courtiers of Versailles and the *beau monde* of Paris, as well as the rich *bourgeoisie*. The reins of power had fallen from the hands of a frugal minister into those of a favourite of high-flown sentiments and extravagant tastes, and with a fondness for pomp and parade. In the unusual lavishness of the king, in his gifts to this haughty dame, the courtiers, doubtless, saw the near realization of their long-cherished hopes of a brilliant court, presided over by a powerful *maîtresse-en-titre*, and at once prepared for the much desired change — society, generally, following their example.

But had the Duchesse de Châteauroux lived, it is doubtful whether, with Louis's extremely indolent temperament and confirmed dislike of showing himself prominently in public, her dream of conducting her lover in triumph through the career of glory marked out for him would ever have been fulfilled. No less doubtful was the nation's endurance of a repetition of the vainglorious martial promenades and distantly viewed sieges that were so gratifying to the vanity of Louis XIV., and so disastrously ruinous to his subjects. In a domestic sense, the results of the king's first campaign

had proved extremely annoying to him. It was not the death of the duchess, though he mourned her loss nearly a whole month — she might be worthily replaced from among the number of "*nobles dames*" vying with each other to obtain the preference — but the intense dislike he had conceived for the dauphin, arising out of the scene at Metz.

Louis believed that he saw in him signs of joy, an assumption of airs of command, and ill-concealed delight at the prospect of shortly succeeding to the throne. The silly speech attributed to him when he first heard of his father's dangerous condition — "*Pauvre peuple, tu n'as donc pas d'autre ressource qu'un enfant de mon âge*" — certainly sounds more like a lesson he had learnt for the occasion, than the spontaneous utterance of a boy. But whichever it may have been, it was extremely displeasing and offensive to the king. The more so as it was diligently repeated by the Jesuits, or queen's party, and greatly lauded, as giving promise of much thoughtfulness for his people in the expected youthful ruler of France. It was, however, received with a sneer by the courtiers, who preferred the rule of a king's mistress to the rule of the Jesuit priesthood. And of these two great evils, which was the lesser it may have been difficult to decide.

The dauphin, at the time the king's life was despaired of at Metz (August, 1744), had not quite

completed his fifteenth year. He was then betrothed to the Infanta Maria Theresa, and in January following the marriage was solemnized. The Ville de Paris celebrated the auspicious event with great magnificence, and gave several balls and public *fêtes*. At one of the *bals masqués*, Madame le Normand d'Étioles was present, unmasked. The king, also, was there, but disguised as a miller. As soon as he perceived the fair lady sitting alone on a sofa, he took a seat by her side, and, believing himself unrecognized, began, as he imagined, to mystify her by entering into a conversation respecting the royal hunt in the forest of Senart.

Madame d'Étioles was accustomed to attend these hunts, her husband's château being situated on the borders of the forest. As she invariably contrived, in the course of the hunt, to cross the king's path, once or twice she had been observed by Madame de Châteauroux, who, suspecting her object, bestowed glances on her would-be rival that surely would have annihilated her could they have taken the effect desired. Madame d'Étioles was distinguished amongst the ladies who joined the king's *partie de chasse* for her skill as a horsewoman. She was extremely well mounted; had a fashionable *équipage de chasse* in attendance to convey her home, and was conspicuous for the elegance of her riding dress. In accordance with the picturesque taste of that day, it was of velvet — of the full bright blue known as "*l'œil du roi*,"

and fastened with richly chased gold buttons. Her hat was of felt of the same colour, edged with gold cord and adorned with a waving white plume. It was a highly effective costume, in the contrast of its colour, with that of the surrounding foliage, and had not escaped the king's notice. He had spoken admiringly of it, as glimpses were caught of its graceful wearer flitting along the paths of the forest.

But the hunting parties came to an end when Madame de Châteauroux carried off her hero to the wars. The *belle* Madame d'Étioles might then have faded out of his memory if she had not already taken the precaution of persuading her husband to have her presented at Versailles by the Princesse de Conti. This *grande dame,* who was overwhelmed with debts, and was a devotee of the gambling table, made her presentations a source of income. Ambitious ladies who had no other means of approaching royalty might make sure of securing the good offices of the princess if they could afford to send her a valuable present that was readily convertible into cash. Its object was perfectly understood: it was a mere affair of "exchange for a presentation." If the applicant had been both liberal and judicious in the choice of an offering, the princess performed her part of the bargain with the best possible grace. In the case of Madame d'Étioles, she declared that she had the greatest satisfac-

tion in presenting at Versailles one of the prettiest women in France.

Though the death of Madame de Châteauroux had occurred so recently, the attentions of the king to Madame d'Étioles had been already sufficiently marked to inspire jealousy and alarm in her husband. He was desperately in love with his wife, poor man. Her presentation at court opened no palace gates to him; but he was tortured with the suspicion that it had opened the doors of the *petits-appartements* to her.

Louis XV. was no stranger, then, to Madame d'Étioles when she met him in the ballroom of the Hotel de Ville, though she did not immediately recognize him. But his voice, which he had not the power of disguising, always betrayed him, and few persons were present to whom the jovial miller's identity was a mystery, while he fancied his *incognito* perfect. The lady, however, was discreet, and after a little lively *badinage* joined the dancers, dropping her handkerchief, perhaps designedly, as she rose from her seat. The king picked it up, and for awhile appeared undecided what to do with it. At last, suddenly, as it seemed, a bright thought occurred to him, and, crossing the ballroom, he presented the handkerchief to Madame d'Étioles, with a very low bow, and, as reported, a very gallant compliment, though it reached only the ears for which it was intended.

"*Le mouchoir est jeté! Le mouchoir est jeté!*"

exclaimed the masks, grouping around him, and taking advantage of their own and the king's disguise to pester him with *piquants bons mots* and sarcastic remarks on the excellence of his taste. This induced his majesty to beat a retreat, and exchange the dusty miller costume for a Turkish one; which would have been more appropriate had he worn it before the ceremony of throwing the handkerchief.

What a fine theme for the *salons*, this so-called "throwing the handkerchief!" For all Paris and Versailles knew the next day of the king's public "act of graciousness" towards *la belle* Madame d'Étioles.

"*Belle si vous voulez, mais bourgeoise tout de même*," exclaimed Madame de Tencin, who had been one of the intimates of Madame de Châteauroux, and who, now getting into years, had become very severe in her strictures on "*les mœurs légères de ces dames bourgeoises*," who presumed to follow the vicious example of their betters. Perceiving the designs of Madame d'Étioles on the king, Madame de Tencin had for some time made it a point of conscience sedulously to endeavour to thwart them.

"*C'est une bourgeoise prétentieuse*," cries another indignant marquise or countess, who cannot, or who will not, believe that the much-coveted distinction of succeeding Madame de Châteauroux can possibly be conferred on any but a lady of the

haute noblesse. Yet, on the very evening that the incident of the handkerchief took place, there were far-seeing courtiers and *grandes dames*, also, at the ball who bestowed the most gracious of smiles and flattering compliments on the lady whom the king had delighted to honour.

A very different view, however, was taken of the honour paid to his wife by M. le Normand d'Étioles. When it came to his ears, "he made," we learn, "*un effrayable vacarme,*" threatened to shut up Madame, and to appeal to the Parliament against the tyranny of the king in destroying the peace and happiness of families by his dissolute life. The result of this outspoken indignation was the rescue of his wife from the seclusion with which he had threatened her, and an invitation to himself to travel. He was free to choose in what direction — England, Italy or elsewhere. He had but to name the country, and the Mousquetaires of M. le Lieutenant would have the honour of escorting him to the frontier. He chose Italy. But exile did not silence his tongue. He continued to inveigh, in no measured terms, against the character and conduct of the king until a communication from the Papal government bade him cease, or take the consequences of his folly.

Madame d'Étioles, in the meantime, was successfully installed at Versailles. One of the *dames du palais* having resigned, the king desired that she should succeed to the vacant post. Poor

Marie Leczinska ventured mildly to oppose it, and proposed a candidate of her own. The king replied that the lady was not of the required rank. The queen retorted that she was certainly of much higher birth than Madame d'Étioles. But Louis XV. did not choose to argue the point. He silenced the queen as it was customary with him to silence all opposition to his wishes. "*Je le veux*," he said, with a very determined air; and accordingly the new favourite was presented to the queen, again by the Princesse de Conti, as one of her ladies of the palace, and an apartment assigned her. Madame d'Étioles was on this occasion, as, indeed, she is said always to have been, highly respectful in her manner towards the queen, who, expecting another haughty Madame de Châteauroux,* was surprised at the change, and received La Marquise de Pompadour not only with less repugnance, but, for a time, with even some show of favour.

The king had raised Madame d'Étioles to the

* Full of superstition, and with a great fear of ghosts, Marie Leczinska, when she heard of the death of the Duchesse de Châteauroux at Versailles (where it was not etiquette for any but royal personages to die), became timid and alarmed at nightfall, in expectation of a ghostly visit from the deceased. An old Polish nurse, who had accompanied her to France, and to whom she imparted her fears, bade her be of good comfort. "She will do in the spirit," she said, "what she did in the flesh—prefer the king's apartments to your majesty's. So let her wander at her will."

needful rank by conferring on her the title of the extinct noble family of De Pompadour, whose arms she also assumed on receiving a considerable portion of the estates. From this time her favour increased; and gradually Madame de Pompadour took upon herself the office of first minister — ruling France as Fleury had done, though with less satisfaction to the nation, by humouring and amusing the king.

From her position with reference to Louis XV. she naturally experienced more difficulty than the cardinal in maintaining that rule. All on whom places or pensions were not bestowed became her enemies. The *haute société* of France of the middle of the eighteenth century were far too thoroughly corrupt to take any moral objection to the dispensing of court favours being placed in the hands of the king's mistress. The only indignity they saw in it was that the lady promoted to that honour was not of noble birth, not one of their noble selves. But the monarch had declared it was his royal will and pleasure that thus it should be, and that "after him might come the deluge;" so the courtiers, for the most part, were content to bow down and lick the dust of the feet of the Marquise de Pompadour.

CHAPTER II.

"Un Dégoût Rhubarbatif."—Jeanne Antoinette Poisson.—Etiquette of the Old Régime.—Jeanne's Father.—Pretty and Beautiful.—Marriage of Mdlle. Poisson.—Mdme. d'Étioles in Society.—Cleopatra and the Asp.—Highly Promoted.—The Bourgeoisie de Paris.—Lanternes à Réverbère.—Evening Promenading.

THE history of Madame de Pompadour has been variously related. She has been greatly exalted and greatly debased, the object of extravagant praise, and no less extravagant invective. "*Elevée par une mère corrompue pour corrompre un roi né religieux*" are the opening words of Soulavie's Mémoires; and exceedingly ridiculous they are. For if Louis XV. really was "born religious," it is very certain that he had entirely lost this innate gift of religion by the time he attained his thirty-fifth year, when he first became subject to the influence of Madame de Pompadour. The work of corruption was surely well-nigh completed under the reign of the four sisters De Nesle, and "*Le bien aimé*" was now a prey to *ennui*, and sometimes to fits of remorse, so profound that life seemed a burden to him. His tapestry, his amateur cookery, his turn-

ing and delving, and other undignified and puerile pursuits had all lost their charm, while a certain restlessness of spirit gave him "*un dégoût rhubarbatif*" for everything and everybody under the sun.

He sighed for new amusements, new pleasures, and had Madame de Châteauroux been spared to him, he possibly might soon have been sighing for new worlds to conquer. But, as it was, when he met Madame de Pompadour, he was like a fish out of water — if so humble a simile be permitted. From the age of five to thirty-three, he had been under the guidance of his preceptor, and for at least eight or nine years had discovered no beauty that could compete with that of the queen. His preceptor was dead, and his queen, chiefly by her own fault, was no longer his queen of beauty. She had tamely yielded her legitimate influence to others. Those others having also disappeared from the stage of life, Madame de Pompadour, or rather Madame d'Étioles, then appears prominently on the scene — ambitious of taking the sceptre of France from the feeble hands of the king.

At the age of three years and a half, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson, it appears, went with her mother and nurse to the house of M. Paris-Duvernay, to see the marriage procession of the king and queen. It was not a very diverting spectacle for so young a child, and little Jeanne, having expressed some impatience, was quieted by: "*Re-*

gardez, mon enfant, voilà le roi, le beau jeune roi, qui va se marier." This seems to have made an impression on the youthful mind of Mdlle. Jeanne, for when her nurse was about to take her in her arms to return home, the child resisted, clung to the window and cried lustily.

"*Mais qu'est ce que c'est donc, ma petite Jeanneton?*" inquires the nurse.

"*Je veux me marier, et j'attends le roi,*" murmurs the child, her eyes streaming with tears.

"*Ah! quel joli petit morceau de femme pour le roi,*" exclaims her mother, laughingly.

Thus is this phrase, apparently a standing joke in the family, accounted for in letters attributed to Madame de Pompadour. And it is as likely to be true as the disagreeable origin elsewhere given to it in some few memoirs of the period not generally trustworthy. That she was brought up from childhood with the view of her becoming the king's mistress is difficult to believe. For it should be remembered that the rigid class distinctions of the old *régime* were still in full force at Versailles, and that the halo of divinity which surrounded and hedged in the king was not yet so dimmed that a family of the *petite bourgeoisie* would presume to bring up a daughter with the view of her filling a post to which only *les filles nobles* could pretend. Besides, the king gave no indications, either then, or for many years after, of sinking into a miserable *débauché*, as he eventually became.

From the letters of Mdlle. Aïssé, which, probably, are authentic, the writer, after deprecating with her usual sentimentality the scandals she so evidently loves to dwell upon, says, "Though these things are done in the face of the sun, yet the court is a pious one, and *les mœurs des deux chefs de l'état* (Fleury and the king) *très sévères. On ne leur fait aucun reproche que de leur moralité.*"

Jeanne's father was *sous-chef* in the commissariat department, an appointment he owed to one of the brothers Pâris. Like too many others, he was afflicted with a mania for gambling, and as he was more frequently a loser than a gainer, and his means, also, were small, his family was often reduced to great straits. This led to defalcations, or embezzlement of some sort, which compelled him secretly to leave France. He was tried in his absence, and condemned to be hanged. Not being forthcoming, he was hanged in effigy, and the whole of his goods were seized by his creditors, leaving his wife and young son and daughter destitute.

For some time both brother and sister had been educated at the expense of M. le Normand Tournehem. By his liberality Jeanne was not only taught engraving, that she might have an occupation that would secure her, if needed, a livelihood, but also instructed, by the best masters obtainable in vocal and instrumental music, in the then fashionable accomplishments of danc-

ing and drawing, in languages, and so forth. Great natural intelligence aiding these educational advantages, Jeanne Antoinette Poisson was a far more highly endowed young lady than most of *les filles nobles* with whom, while pursuing her studies, she sometimes came in contact, though "*la distance de condition*" forbade any approach to intimacy.

Until about her fifteenth year she was so extremely thin that, except in grace of movement, she gave no promise of becoming "*la plus belle femme de la capitale.*" "There was in her countenance," says even one who delights to heap obloquy upon her, "a most attractive blending of vivacity and tenderness. It was a countenance that might be called both pretty and beautiful. To her personal graces was added the charm of her many accomplishments; and the thorough instruction she had received imparted great interest to her conversation." "*Un certain art de badiner*" which she possessed in perfection, and which, though lively and piquant, was refined in tone, highly delighted and amused the distinguished circle of *beaux esprits*, *gens-de-lettres*, and members of the *beau monde*, who filled her *salon* when she became Madame le Normand d'Étioles.

She was then between eighteen and nineteen. M. le Normand Tournehem — a man of good family, and one of the *fermiers généraux*, therefore rich — had proposed to leave her the half

of his property. But his nephew having fallen deeply in love with her, a marriage was arranged by which eventually she was to succeed to the whole of the uncle's fortune. The consent of the young man's father was reluctantly given. The daughter of a man who had been hanged in effigy, and who, until recently (interest having been made to set aside this disgraceful sentence for the lesser one of banishment), dared not return to France lest he should undergo that process in person, was not, he considered, a very desirable match. But he yielded to the infatuation of his son and the wishes of his brother, M. le Normand Tournehem. Most unfortunately, the young lady had no love for her husband. So far as she was concerned, it was one of those conventional French marriages in which love is not even a secondary consideration, though affection and happiness often result from them; but in this instance the bridegroom was deeply in love.

"With ample means at command, and gifts, natural and acquired, such as hers," remarks M. Bungener, "she might have taken a very high place in society, and would have played a brilliant part in the world, had she never approached the steps of the throne." She was of the sect of the philosophers of course, being on terms of friendly intimacy with Voltaire, who sometimes sojourned for a week or ten days together at the Château d'Étioles, where he wrote some portion of his

"Histoire Générale" and his "Charles XII.;" also, as historiographer of France, the account of the king's first campaign in Flanders, from the reports transmitted to him by M. d'Argenson. With Voltaire, she was received at Sceaux, where some dramatic bagatelles he had written for the duchess's theatre were performed. While there they heard of the death of Cardinal Fleury, whom she had once met in the *salon* of Madame de Carignan, and again at a supper at Madame de Tencin's, where his particular notice of her seems to have been rather displeasing to the hostess.

Both before and after her marriage she frequented the best literary *salons* — the brilliant, artistic and philosophic receptions of the moralist Vauvenargues, at the Hôtel de Tours, and the grave and learned circle of M. de Chenevières. Crébillon and Voltaire were then not only at peace, but, apparently, there was friendship between them. The next year there was war to the knife.

It was at a reception *chez* M. de Chenevières, that Madame d'Étioles first met Marmontel, then very young, and but recently arrived from Toulouse with a great provincial literary reputation. With M. d'Étioles she attended the first representation of his tragedy of "Cleopatra." It appears that the theatre was crowded even more than was usual on such occasions, the doors being besieged by an anxious crowd long before the time

for admission. This intense interest was due less to the new play and the great actress, Mdlle. Clairon, who played the heroine, than to a mechanical asp made by the mechanician, Vaucanson, and which, held in the hand of Cleopatra, represented all the movements of a live reptile. The illusion was perfect. But while watching the twisting and turning of the creature, both author and actress were but little attended to. The mechanical triumph of M. Vaucanson proved, indeed, so prejudicial to their success that it had to be abandoned.

Marmontel was afterwards one of Madame de Pompadour's *protégés*, and, generally, rising young artists and literary men found in her an enlightened appreciation of their talents and productions. The *salon* of Madame d'Étioles would doubtless have become the most brilliant and distinguished of the period, as she was herself the most remarkably talented, gifted, and beautiful woman of her day, had not want of moral principles, and an intense love of power, led her to seek the gratification of her ambitious views in the much-envied position of the king's recognized mistress. To speak of it as a disreputable position is to judge it by a different standard of morality from that which prevailed at the period. For the elevation, as it was termed, of Madame d'Étioles shocked only because it was the first instance of *une dame bourgeoise*, or lady of the middle class, having

been so "highly promoted," and accordingly it was resented as one of the social innovations of that innovating age on the privileges of the *haute noblesse*, and a breach of the etiquette of the old *régime*. But when Madame de Pompadour took up the sceptre of France, she was fully impressed by the idea that her reign would be a long one. She had the tact, or the art, to impress the same conviction on others, and thus secured as her partizans all who were ambitious and who sought court favour, without which the road to distinction was then closed to most persons. To assist at the *toilette* of La Marquise de Pompadour was soon, therefore, a favour more eagerly desired than to assist at the *petit lever* of the king.

The court became more brilliant, the *salons* more animated, from the time of her accession to power. The change which French society had for some years been gradually undergoing seemed to have derived from that event a fresh impulse. The *bourgeoisie* rapidly rose in importance, while the *prestige* of the *noblesse* declined. It was owing, however, rather to the flourishing state of French commerce, which, almost extinct when Louis XV. came of age, had been fostered and renewed under the peaceful policy and economical administration of Fleury. The class in whose hands lay the wealth of the country now claimed consideration where, hitherto, it had, at best, been but tolerated, while the great and increasing

spread of the new philosophism tended towards the levelling of social inequalities, and the depriving the *gentilhomme* of his long-enjoyed privilege of contemning and insulting the *bourgeois*.

Barbier records in his journal (1745), that "the *bourgeoisie* of Paris," meaning the trading and shopkeeping section, "are no longer content with their station — that they, in fact, know not their place," since they have been permitted, with impunity, not only to abandon the characteristic dress prescribed by Richelieu to mark the line of separation between them and the upper ranks of society, but also to resume the use of gold, silver, and jewels, forbidden under the regency. Another French writer observes that, in a country where wealth, without noble descent, had never yet obtained social consideration, the *parvenu millionaire* was now courted and honoured far more than the needy *gentilhomme*, though he could prove the nobility of his family for seventeen generations.

Trade was prosperous, and men engaged in it had been quietly laying by money, while the upper *bourgeoisie*, and the *noblesse*, had been squandering it. The small, dark shops, which hitherto had served for the needs of the Parisians, were abandoned for more commodious ones, with superior dwelling accommodation. The introduction at this time of the *lanternes à réverbère* made Paris a brilliantly lighted city · compared

with its previous gloom after nightfall. It induced, also, the lighting up of shops, and favoured the now general custom of promenading on the Boulevards in the evening — a recreation to which all the classes were devoted. Ladies, as well as gentlemen, made use of walking canes — the *bourgeoise* presuming also to follow this *mode;* just as at home, she carried her snuff-box or *bonbonnière*, and flaunted in silk attire, with a wide-spreading *panier,* and jewels and lace, with as grand an air as any marquise or duchess.

The various trades no longer congregated each in its own distinct street, but were located indiscriminately in different parts of the city. The most thriving of the shopkeepers began to have their *campagnes* in the suburbs, and shopmen were employed where, heretofore, wives and daughters attended in the business. "Now, they have their weekly receptions," says Mercier, "take their tea and coffee, disdain tallow candles, and, like their betters, burn *bougies* and set out their card-tables for the evening."

CHAPTER III.

Le Maréchal de Saxe. — The Dauphin's Baptême de Feu. — Mdme. de Pompadour at the Wars. — Her Heart Grew Faint. — A Revulsion of Feeling. — "Oh, Saddle White Surrey!" — Mars and Venus. — Scenes of the War. — Le Poème de Fontenoy. — Evé of the Battle of Rocoux. — The Baggage of War. — Living en Bourgeois. — Bravery and its Rewards. — A Soldier of Fortune.

FOLLOWING the example of Madame de Châteauroux, Madame de Pompadour, with more successful results, had prevailed on the king to rejoin the army in Flanders, to complete, as she flatteringly observed, his series of conquests interrupted by the *contre-temps* of his illness at Metz. The Maréchal de Saxe had already left Paris to resume the chief command of the French armies, though suffering greatly from languor and weakness, his health being seriously undermined by the excesses of a dissolute life. But his great flow of spirits, his courage and martial ardour, sustained him on this trying occasion. To Voltaire's question, "*Comment il pourrait faire dans cet état de faiblesse?*" the maréchal replied: "*Il ne s'agit pas de vivre, mais de partir.*"

Yet he was often compelled to dismount while

giving his orders for the disposition of the troops in action, and to repose in a litter of wickerwork, which served him both for a carriage and a bed. He was a very great soldier, undoubtedly, this son of the beautiful Aurora von Königsmark. His qualities, as such, were generally acknowledged by the officers of the French army, whose most distinguished generals served under him; the more readily, it may be, that he was not a Frenchman. He was now, with a very numerous force, investing the strong citadel of Tournai — considered one of the *chefs-d'œuvre* of Vauban's system of fortification. A battle seemed imminent, and the king being informed of it, yielded to the suggestions of his *belle maîtresse* that he should kindle fresh valour in his troops by showing himself at the head of his armies.

Once more, then, the royal hero dons his plumed helmet and girds on his valiant sword, and, accompanied by a numerous retinue and brilliant staff, sets out for Flanders amidst the enthusiastic acclamations of the Parisian people. On the 6th of May he arrived at Douai, whence, on the following day, he proceeded to Pontachin, to reconnoitre with his generals the neighbourhood of the expected battle-field. The reception of "*Le bien aimé*" by his troops might have gladdened the heart of Henri IV.; and the *vivas* loud and long, repeated from rank to rank, may momentarily have gratified Louis XV., though these

public ovations usually rather annoyed than pleased him.

The dauphin on this occasion also visited the armies, to receive his "*baptême de feu.*" The relations between Louis and his son were frigid in the extreme. Yet the latter appears to have been most respectful in his behaviour towards the king, never presuming on his rank, but attending the *petit lever* with the officers of his corps — allowing those of higher grade to enter before him, and mounting guard at the royal head-quarters simply as captain of his regiment of "Gendarmes et chevau-légers du dauphin." He conducted himself also with as much bravery as could be expected in a youth yet scarcely sixteen, and who, moreover, was restrained from seeking any post of real danger. A little ostentatious piety in the publicity with which he performed his devotions — at the instance indeed of his Jesuit confessor, who was glad to offer, in the face of the armies, this annoyance to the king — was all that could well be complained of.

Madame de Pompadour had solicited and obtained permission to join the king at the camp of the Maréchal de Saxe. She did not, however, like Madame de Châteauroux, take a formal leave of the queen, but decamped without beat of drum with the minister of war, Comte d'Argenson, to whom the king had given leave to offer her a seat in his carriage. Two days before the battle they

arrived in the neighbourhood of Tournai. D'Argenson immediately proceeded to the king's headquarters, leaving Madame at a place of safety near Antoin.

What anxious fears filled her breast during those forty-eight hours! How, at any moment, some unexpected turn of fortune might wrest the sceptre of France from her hand ere she had firmly grasped it! And when the day of the contest came, and the roar of the cannon reached her ears, and the din of battle was borne on the breeze in fitful and confused sounds, how she trembled! The star of her fortunes seemed to pale, and her ambitious hopes to be crushed in the bud, as she listened to the thunder of war. "Her heart grew faint, as though 't would die within her."

But her anxiety was not for her hero's life; she knew that he was safe enough out of harm's way. But, ah! should the battle go against him — and Maurice de Saxe was more famous for his retreats than his victories — what might be the consequence to her? The king had remarked that "since the days of Saint Louis no king of France had gained any signal victory over the English." It is against an English army, led by the impetuous young Duke of Cumberland, that the army of France is now fighting. The victory depends on good generalship — and whatever his sufferings, Maurice de Saxe may be depended on for that —

not, as in these degenerate days, on the possession of the most murderous weapons, when, after remorselessly mowing down thousands with their "monster guns," pious emperors and kings send telegrams to wives and mistresses with the news that "God hath blessed them with victory" — God being in these civilized times on the side of the latest diabolical inventions, as formerly He was said to favour the biggest battalions. Oh, for the days when, as the old song says, "They who make the quarrel may be the only men to fight."

But we have wandered from the village of Antoin, where we left the *belle marquise* a prey to anxious thought. She looks forth from her chamber window; her face is pale, her eye is haggard; she wonders why his charger or his chariot is so long in coming. But in the distance she espies a horseman, another, and again another. They ride only as aides-de-camp ride, even at reviews — as if for their very lives. The Maréchal Comte d'Estrées brings a message from the king to the Marquise de Pompadour, with the news of the victory of Fontenoy. The maréchal tells of the prodigies of valour performed by the king, of the terrible risks he has run, of his hairbreadth escapes, and the courage always so conspicuous in the Bourbon race, of which he has given such startling proofs.

What a revulsion of feeling this news occasions! Despondency had begun to cast its dark shadow

o'er the agitated mind of the marquise; now it is dispelled by the bright gleams of triumph, and, in the excess of her joy, she resolves to ride over personally to congratulate her hero, to the village of Fontenoy. There, the maréchal informs her, the king may yet be found. "Oh, saddle White Surrey!" She cannot wait until the cumbrous carriage, with all its fine trappings, is got ready. Her horse is brought forth; lightly she mounts it, and outstrips in speed the maréchal and his aides-de-camp, stopping once in the forest of Barri to gather a branch of oak.

The king — with the dauphin, the Maréchal de Saxe, the Duc de Richelieu (the king's aide-de-camp), the Duc de Penthièvre ("notre Toulouse"), and le Prince de Soubise (whose tent was a sort of *restaurant* during the campaign), and other staff officers — was entering the forest of Barri when the marquise was seen approaching from the opposite side. Louis immediately recognized his lady-love, and, *mettant pied à terre* as she rode up, assisted her himself to dismount — she taking that opportunity of fastening the branch of oak in his helmet. Following the example of the king, the whole of his brilliant military escort alighted to receive the fair Marquise de Pompadour. The flush of excitement heightened the natural bloom of her cheek, and gratified ambition shone in her lustrous dark eyes, as their proud glance rested on the imposing spectacle before her. The king

(whom, if she did not love, she may have admired as she would the Apollo Belvidere) was then in the full vigour of manly beauty. As he stood there, with plumed casque in hand, surrounded by the most distinguished generals of the age, and crowned with the laurels of victory, fresh from the battle-field, the overwrought imagination of an ambitious-minded woman might regard the gay pageant as typical of France, her ruler, and her armies, bowing before her — a dream that not long after was literally fulfilled.

This meeting of Mars and Venus in the forest of Barri must have been a very pretty scene, and shed an air of romance on Fontenoy. It served to distract the mind from the horrors of war (for fourteen thousand men lay dead on the plain where that desperate battle had been fought), and the king immediately before had been moralizing on the subject for the benefit of his son. The dauphin, in his turn, might afterwards have moralized on the scene in the forest of Barri for the benefit of his father, as he stood, bareheaded, before his mistress. Neither in youth nor manhood was the dauphin an attractive personage. He was the slave of Jesuit priests, and displayed but little intelligence, and no great amiability. But to witness the deference, the honour, so publicly paid to his mother's rival, and in which he was himself obliged to take part, must have been mortifying and painful indeed.

While compliments and felicitations were being exchanged, two soldiers of the *Gardes françaises* arrived, bearing a litter, on which was extended the body of the Duc de Grammont. Suddenly struck down by a random shot, he had begged that he might see and bid adieu to the king before he died. But life was found to be extinct when he reached the royal presence. What a sight for the *jolie marquise!* Happily, however, her nerves were stronger than was considered quite *bon ton* in those days, so that, although anxious eyes were upon her, she felt no inclination to faint. So far from it, that, perceiving M. Du Guesclin propped up against a tree, where he was waiting the arrival of a surgeon — his leg having been shattered by a spent ball — she hastened, as a Sister of Mercy, to afford him, *en attendant* a more skilful hand, such relief as she was able — dressing and binding up his wounds with her handkerchief and portions of cambric and lace torn from her dress. The king and all present were, naturally, enchanted — even the dauphin smiled kindly upon her.

On the following day there was a solemn Te Deum and a general salvo of the army — all was "Joie, gloire, et *la tendresse*," as d'Argenson wrote to Voltaire. Three days after the battle, arrived Voltaire's "Poème de Fontenoy," of which thirty thousand copies were distributed amongst the army. He is said to have written it in a

single day, but, doubtless, it was prepared beforehand, and awaited only d'Argenson's reports of the battle to impart to it certain touches of *vraisemblance*.

Fontenoy was an important victory to France. Ten days after it, Tournai surrendered, which led to the conquest of the whole of the Austrian Netherlands. The king made a triumphal entry into Tournai, and, after visiting other places in Flanders, returned with Madame de Pompadour to Paris early in September, 1745.

The battle of Rocoux brought the campaign to an end. It was fought on the 11th of October, and was generally considered as a mere wanton destruction of human life. For though victory remained with the French, neither side lost nor gained territory or other advantage by it. The Maréchal de Saxe, supposed to be dying at the opening of the campaign, seemed to revive and to gain renewed strength as victory followed victory. Yet even he appeared to be by no means elated by the victory of Rocoux, but rather oppressed by so great and unnecessary an effusion of blood. It was his custom to have a company of actors in his suite, to amuse the soldiers, and to keep up their spirits when not in action. On the eve of the battle of Rocoux, the play was thus announced:

"To-morrow there will be no performance, on account of the maréchal intending to give battle.

The day after to-morrow we shall have the honour of playing before you 'The Village Chanticleer' and 'Rhadamiste.'"

Yet the maréchal, though thus seemingly assured of victory, was not in his usual spirits; for with the presentiment of success, he foresaw also the terrible carnage that would ensue. The Marquis de Fénelon, nephew of the great Archbishop of Cambrai, was among the slain in that sanguinary contest. He was shot down in the intrenchments.

After the battle the army went into winter quarters, and the Maréchal de Saxe returned to Paris to participate in the *fêtes* with which the Hôtel de Ville and the Parisian people celebrated the return of the king and the successes of the campaign in Flanders. It was scarcely possible to exceed in enthusiasm the demonstrations of joy of the preceding year. Yet the results of the campaign were more important. The monarch then returned to his people, raised, as by a miracle, from the bed of death. Now he came back to them as a conqueror, bearing the palm of victory, and with the reputation, more or less merited, of a valiant soldier.

There were murmurings, it is true — or, amongst the more lenient of "The well-beloved's" *bon peuple de Paris*, expressions of regret — that again he should have deemed a mistress a necessary part of the baggage of war. The custom

was, however, an old one, though it would, of course, have been more honoured in the breach than the observance. "*La belle Gabrielle*" graced the guerilla camp of the gallant and brave Henri IV. The tearful La Vallière and the haughty Montespan graced the glass coach of his godship, Louis XIV., when he took a trip to the wars, and sought glory within ear-shot of the roar of the cannon. A *maîtresse-en-titre* was, in fact, then regarded as one of the indispensable trappings of royalty, as also, under the less high-sounding appellation of "*amie intime*," of every *grand seigneur*, and *gentilhomme* of fortune, who rightly considered what was due to his rank and station.

If the honest *bourgeois* but very rarely followed this social custom, it was because, on the one hand, it was looked upon as an especial privilege of his betters; on the other, that few cared to incur so superfluous an expense, entailing also an inconvenient interference with *bourgeois* habits. Hence the phrase, "*ils vivent en bourgeois*," applied to those who lived reputably and happily, and respected the ties of marriage and of family. The murmurings against Louis XV., for doing only as his predecessors, in that respect, had done, arose, then, not from considerations of morality, but chiefly out of the financial condition of the country, which, but recently rescued by strict economy from the very verge of bankruptcy, was again men-

aced with distress — no less by the extravagance of the king's mistresses than by the heavy expenses of the war.

In addition to the legitimate cost of war, which fell as a burdensome tax on the people, there had arisen the pernicious custom of conferring large pecuniary rewards on all officers, of any rank, who had witnessed or taken part in an action. The nation had degenerated. The French officer cared so little for his country that nothing spurred him on to be brave in its defence but the expectation of being largely paid for it. All came forward at the end of the campaign with complaints of detriment to their fortune by absence at the war, and a claim for compensation. Once upon a time, to be decorated with the cross of Saint Louis was the most coveted reward of the brave and gallant soldier; now, little was thought of it. "*On a attaché à ma boutonnière*," said a lieutenant of grenadiers, "*le signe de mon courage, mais on a oublié la réalité de ma valeur.*"

"*Misère, misère*," cried the grandees who had held all the chief commands, "*misère, misère*," while indulging in every extravagance and luxury. The rank and file who had done all the fighting were, however, rewarded with their *congé*, and permission to seek a subsistence wherever they could find it, or to be content to starve. Fleury might well dread war; he knew that the military chiefs were inexorable creditors, rating their doubtful

services exorbitantly high, and demanding prompt payment in *argent comptant*, with which the coffers of France were rarely overflowing.

The parsimony of Louis XV. was proverbial when his own private purse was concerned; but he did not object to liberality when the nation provided the funds. The successes of the campaign in Flanders were owing chiefly to the Maréchal de Saxe; and the king, in acknowledgment of his services, conferred on him the title of Comte de Saxe and the post of Maréchal-Général des Armées de France. He presented him also with six of the cannon taken at Rocoux, to place in front of the Château de Chambord, which, with its wide domain and dependencies — furnishing a revenue of between seven and eight millions of *francs* — he presented as a gift to the Saxon hero, adding to this princely donation a pension of forty thousand *francs*. Maurice de Saxe was indeed a fortunate soldier of fortune.

CHAPTER IV.

"La Reine de Navarre." — "Le Temple de la Gloire." — "Trajan, est il Content?" — The King's Petits Soupers. — The King's Morals in Danger. — Horace, Virgil, and Voltaire. — Jealousy of Piron. — The Laurel Crown of Glory. — Les Modes Pompadour. — An Evening with the Queen. — The Queen and the Maréchal. — "Ora pro Nobis." — M. de Saxe Caught Napping. — The Illustrious Mouthier. — La Marquise Bourgeoise. — La Grande Politesse. — The Old Régime.

VERY brilliant season, both at Paris and Versailles, followed the military successes of France. Religious dissensions, parliamentary quarrels, all were forgotten in the general joy. Even the severity of the Jansenists relaxed, and the scruples of the Jesuits gave way, before a nation's enthusiasm. With all classes, *fêtes* and rejoicings formed the chief business of the hour. Had Louis XV. been the god of war in person, greater adulation could not have been paid him. His flatterers found language wanting in words of sufficient force of meaning to convey an idea of the royal warrior's feats of arms, or to express their own great admiration of his prowess.

Such incense would have seemed natural, and

been acceptable, offered to Louis XIV.; to his successor it gave no satisfaction whatever. The times were changed; already the old *régime* had begun to totter. This extravagant praise and fulsome flattery had now more the air of mockery than of compliment, and the excitement of war having passed away, Louis would infallibly have sunk back to the apathy and gloom habitual to him, with intervals of tapestry and cookery, had not Madame de Pompadour come to the rescue. It was at this time that she introduced scenic representations at Versailles, and formed her *troupe* of comedians and dancers — all *grands seigneurs*, and all happy to obey the favourite's slightest behest.

The *petite opéra* of "La Reine de Navarre" had been produced by Voltaire for the marriage *fêtes* of the dauphin. At its first representation it had met with the general approval of the court; and *grandes dames* intrigued for the principal *rôles*, thinking to fascinate the king. But Madame, with her musical attainments and terpsichorean graces, of course reserved for herself the parts for *prima donna* and *première danseuse*. Voltaire, it appears, rather coveted the post of stage-manager, but the lady preferred in this, as in more important affairs, to retain the management in her own hands. It was afterwards remarked that the poet had not been judicious in his choice of a subject, yet the king was so well

pleased with the piece that it procured for Voltaire—at the instance, however, of Madame de Pompadour—the appointment of Gentilhomme de la Chambre. He was now requested to write a similar piece, the subject having reference to the war, for a proposed *fête* at Versailles. The result was "Le Temple de la Gloire," with a prologue, after the manner of Metastasio's productions. It was set to music by Rameau, who had composed the dances and songs of the "Reine de Navarre"—and was performed in the *petits appartements*. In the opening of the piece, Trajan (Louis XV.) was seen giving peace to Europe, and the Temple of Glory afterwards opening to receive him. Voltaire had obtained permission to be present at its first representation. It was extremely well received. But the vanity of the poet led to a breach of etiquette on his part that gave great offence to Trajan.

It was utterly contrary to the usage of the court to address the king. But when he was leaving the theatre, Voltaire, throwing himself in his way, exclaimed, "*Trajan, est-il content?*" This caused a momentary interruption to the progress of the king and his retinue; but a look of astonishment and indignation that would have fallen as a thunderbolt on a less dauntless intruder was the only reply vouchsafed. Madame de Pompadour, desirous of soothing the wounded *amour-propre* of her poet friend, prevailed on the king

to allow the offence to pass unnoticed, assuring him that irrepressible admiration of his majesty's valour, not presumption, had occasioned it. Further to console him for the severity of the rebuke, there was confided to him the drawing up of a manifesto, which it was intended to publish when the projected descent on England should be made, to assist the vain efforts of the young Pretender, then in Scotland, to gain possession of the English throne. The defeat at Culloden put an end to this project.

But Voltaire was as little disposed to evince gratitude for such a commission as to display any mortification — whatever he might feel — at the rebuff he had received. Louis XV. had made an enemy of one of whom Madame de Pompadour — flattering his weaknesses — would have made a partizan. For she fully appreciated the talents of Voltaire, and his influence on the opinions of the age. She believed, too, that he might successfully aid her in weaning the king from the habits he had contracted — but which then, perhaps, were too thoroughly confirmed — of drunkenness and gluttony, varied only by his addiction to the chase. The white cotton cap and apron of a *chef* were distasteful to her. She would have had him become the patron of men of letters, encourage science and art, embellish his capital, and take some pleasure in *spirituelle* conversation and the society of the *savants*.

But it was late in the day for Louis XV. to become thus reformed. It was both his misfortune and his fault to be too thoroughly perverted; and, besides, he disliked Voltaire. Yet, at the solicitation of the favourite, he was on the point of inviting him to the *petits soupers* at Versailles. Listening ears, however, had by some means obtained a knowledge of the secret, and, before the honour of an invitation was actually conferred, all the illustrious mediocrities of the court were up in arms to oppose so monstrous an infraction of *les convenances* as that of admitting a poet to sit at the table of a king.

The Jesuits were in an extraordinary state of agitation, and, by their denunciations of the diabolical project, frightened poor Marie Leczinska and the dauphin out of their senses. "The king," they told them, "ran the risk of becoming a philosopher!" What more terrible fate could befall him? He still said his prayers daily, and went regularly to mass, though he had given up his Holy Week devotions — not caring humbly to ask of his priest a "*billet de confession*," which was absolutely necessary since the Gallican Church had received the horrid Bulle Unigenitus into its bosom, and the pugnacious Christophe de Beaumont reigned as Archbishop of Paris. Predictions, presentiments, anticipations, of some national calamity looming in the future were at that time very general. No one knew exactly the nature of

the trouble looked forward to, but each interpreted his fears according to his opinion of the aspect of things then existing in Church and State.

The queen and the dauphin, alarmed by the Jesuits — who probably foresaw their own downfall — believed that the universe would be shaken to its centre if Louis XV. — guided by the guiding spirit of the age, the mocking, sceptical Voltaire — should profess himself of the sect of the philosophers. Yet Voltaire and his "*belle* Émilie" had sat at the table of the queen's father — the worthy Stanislaus — at whose little court of Lunéville the Marquise de Boufflers played the part of the Marquise de Pompadour at Versailles — and no harm had come of it; though the excellent Pole, so much respected by his subjects, was, in fact, *très philosophe* in his principles. But, as the poet himself remarked to the Duc de Richelieu, "Horace and Virgil had dined with Augustus; why, then, should not Voltaire sup with Louis XV.?"

Why not, indeed? except that, as Madame de Pompadour sarcastically observed, "*Les sots n'aiment pas de se trouver à table avec un homme d'esprit.*" So powerful, however, was the influence secretly employed to exclude him from the *petits appartements* that he determined to resign the office conferred on him of Gentilhomme de la Chambre du roi — its duties being so little in harmony with his feelings and character. The

king gave him permission to dispose of his *charge* (worth from two to three hundred thousand *francs*), as then was customary, but allowed him to retain all the privileges attached to it. As Voltaire loved money, that course, naturally, was much more agreeable to him than resigning.

Piron — who professed to be a rival of Voltaire — piqued by the favour with which the dramatic trifle of "Le Temple de la Gloire" had been received by the court, vented his spleen in a satire upon it. It was amusing and epigrammatic, it must be confessed; far more so than those with which jealousy had inspired him when ridiculing compositions of a more elevated character — Mérope and Œdipus, for instance. Piron, though so highly appreciated in his congenial taverns and *cabarets*, and at the Théâtre de la Foire, could not forgive Voltaire his success in the *salons*, and at the Théâtre Français. Never since he put into rhyme the false report that Voltaire had fled from Paris to escape incarceration in the Bastille, for his play of "Mahomet," when in reality the cardinal had despatched him to Berlin on a secret mission, had Piron omitted any opportunity of disparaging in scurrilous epigrams the productions of his rival.

Piron was especially a poet of the people. His satire in no way detracted from the success of Voltaire's *petite pièce* when it was produced at the opera. Some complimentary lines to the Maréchal

de Saxe had been added to the prologue by the author, to be recited on the occasion of his visit to the theatre. His siege operations at Rocoux had delayed his return to Paris until the public festivities were nearly concluded. To do the honours, as it were, of the hero's triumph, then devolved, at the king's request, chiefly on Madame de Pompadour, who accompanied him to the opera, and, by previous arrangement with Mdlle. Favart, who personated *La Gloire*, procured an ovation for the maréchal. Moved by a sudden impulse, as it seemed, the actress, while reciting the new lines of the prologue, snatched from her head the laurels she wore in her character of Glory, and, advancing towards the front of the royal box, then occupied by De Saxe, laid her leafy crown before him.

The whole of the audience, inspired by this act, simultaneously arose, and with *vivas* hearty and prolonged, applauded the great soldier with so much enthusiasm that with difficulty he repressed his emotion. Voltaire was present, but out of sight. The maréchal insisted on his coming forward. The applause was then renewed, and taken up again and again, vociferously, in the course of the piece.

From the prevalence of *les modes Pompadour* among the more distinguished and courtly part of the audience, it would almost seem that it had been intended to celebrate also the triumph of the

marquise. The number of embroidered "*habits à la Marquise*" worn by the gentlemen was remarkable. They were of the colour she favoured — a full bright blue, once known as "*l'œil du roi*," now as "*bleu Pompadour*." The *coiffure* and *fichu à la Marquise*, with the *panier* of diminished proportions, were also general.

Even the military paid their court by wearing the "*rosette à la Pompadour*" — her arrangement of the sword-knot of the Maréchal de Saxe, who, not being very attentive to the neatness of his dress, had appeared in the presence of the marquise with his sword-knot put on in a rather slovenly fashion. With her own fair hands she arranged it for him, and with so much taste and skill that the officers of his *corps* generally adopted it. Voltaire also took to a sky-blue coat at this time, and was faithful to it to the end.

Although the poet might not sup with the king, he was invited to sup with the maréchal, whom, with the chief officers of his corps and a number of distinguished guests, courtiers and ladies, the marquise was to entertain in her apartments the next evening. After the opera, which began and ended early, the maréchal was engaged to the queen. Maria Leczinska had taken no part in the *fêtes*, though more than once requested to do so by the king. Naturally, she did not wish to assist at the triumph of her rival; yet she was anxious that the maréchal should know that she

was not insensible to his merits and the services he had rendered to France.

The queen's intimate circle included the Duc and Duchesse de Luynes, the Cardinal de Luynes, their uncle, M. and Madame de la Vauguyon, the President Hénault, Madame de Flavacourt, sister of Madame de Châteauroux, the Jesuit Père Griffet, and others. They were said to pass their evenings in the manner supposed to be customary in England — in reading books of devotion, or in dreary, desultory conversation, with long intervals of silence, often ending in the company generally being caught napping. Sometimes the game of "*Que me promettez vous?*" was introduced by way of recreation. Or the dauphin and the young dauphine would sing psalms to the accompaniment of the *clavecin*, the evening concluding, when the circle was sufficiently wide awake, with general prayer. The queen read, the company made the responses.

The maréchal prepared himself to entertain, rather than to be entertained, to tell anecdotes of the war, to laud the courage of the king and the bravery of the dauphin. On arriving, he found the usual circle assembled, and some of them, to his surprise, engaged at the card-table, an occupation that appeared to amuse them more than the warrior's tales of the battle-field. The queen lamented with him the miseries occasioned by war, complimented him on his successes, but

mildly reproved him for entertaining his soldiers with plays, when serious thoughts should rather be instilled into their minds, as men about to face death. The maréchal explained that it was far more desirable to keep them bright and cheerful, whatever might befall them, than to oppress their minds with gloom and the terrors of an approaching end. Opinions differed on the subject, but no one went to sleep.

When about to take leave of the queen, the maréchal was requested by her, as appropriately concluding their serious discussion, to join with her circle in prayer. Of course he willingly assented. An arm-chair, serving as a *prie-dieu*, was then placed for each person in front of a large crucifix opposite her majesty's bed (she received in her *ruelle*), the whole forming a semi-circle. The queen read, as was her custom, and the kneeling company responded. All the saints in the litany were named in their turn, and, as each name was pronounced, "*Ora pro nobis*" was duly ejaculated.

The list was a long one. The maréchal was not in robust health. The ovation at the opera and his long conversation with the queen had exhausted him. Sooth to say, or shame to say, he fell asleep as he knelt in his arm-chair, the monotony of the oft-repeated "*Ora pro nobis*" overcoming his best efforts to keep his eyes open.

The prayers are ended; the company rise from

their knees — all except the maréchal. He seems to be buried in profound meditation, and is allowed for a few minutes to remain undisturbed. The pious Marie Leczinska knows that the life of this gallant soldier is not free from blame, and she hopes that, suddenly conscience-stricken, a conversion may, through her, have taken place.

But he stirs not. The company, in a circle, stand gazing upon him. At last the queen approaches him. "*Allons, Monsieur de Saxe,*" she says, softly, "*c'est assez pour la première fois.*" There is no response. Presently, a little louder, she speaks, now somewhat doubtingly. "*Ne vous fatiguez pas, Monsieur de Saxe.*" The sleeper is partly aroused, and in a loud voice, to make up for long silence, begins, "*Ora pro nobis,*" "*Ora pro nobis.*" Even the queen and the pious dauphin cannot resist laughing, and the maréchal, now fully aware of what has happened, rises from his knees, and, with much confusion of face, apologizes to the queen for his misdemeanor. She readily takes into consideration his fatiguing campaign, his enfeebled state of health, and willingly pardons, believing that the spirit was willing though the flesh was weak.

How different the scene on the following evening, when the maréchal was received by the brilliant marquise. Her guests are all of high rank, or of distinguished attainments. The supper prepared for them is the production of

Mouthier, the famous *chef* of the *petits appartements*, and a man more considered and valued by Louis XV. than the most enlightened of his ministers or the most skilful of his generals. Mouthier prides himself on his ancestry. He is a descendant of a long line of famous cooks, an illustrious *famille de cuisine*. His art, he firmly believes, is the first in the world — one that, rightly regarded, would have more real influence on the fate of nations than the wiliest policy of all the most able diplomatists of Europe combined.

His grandfather was *chef* to Louis XIV., and deep in the confidence of Madame de Maintenon, "*une très grande dame*," he says, who, following the gastronomic counsels of Mouthier, managed the *Grand Monarque* and his ministers as she willed. Faithful to the traditions of his family, the younger Mouthier may have imparted these culinary secrets to Madame de Pompadour, and her twenty years of omnipotence in France thus be accounted for.

At all events, the appointments of her supper-table are splendid, the arrangements artistic, and M. Mouthier's repast no less so. It gives evident satisfaction to all who partake of it; it is mirth-inspiring, as the great *artiste* probably intended, for the dullest brain is quickened, and some sparkle added to the liveliest. *Piquants bons mots* are plentiful, and flashes of wit follow each other in quick succession in brilliant repartee.

The *toilettes* of the ladies, and their gracefully arranged *coiffures* of flowers and lace, are charming, while the perfect taste of the marquise — who has brought this fashion into vogue — is seen in the extreme elegance of her own dress, and the artistic refinement exhibited in the furniture and embellishments of her apartment. She is decidedly the star of the court, this "*jolie marquise bourgeoise*," who, unfortunately, loving power, to obtain it, "*avait eu la faiblesse*," as Marmontel regretfully observes, "*de vouloir plaire au roi, et le malheur d'y réussir.*" Her conversation fascinates even more than her beauty attracts. Her vivacity sets the bright thoughts in motion that might have lain dormant in other minds but for contact with her own.

Her suppers were not Bacchanalian feasts, like those at which, in their youth, Madame de Tencin, Madame du Deffant, Madame de Caylus, and other *esprits forts* of *facile mœurs*, assisted under the regency. The moral tone of society was certainly but very slightly improved. But the habits of the king's earlier years, and the grave ministry of Fleury, had compelled profligacy to veil itself; and if the men and women who sat at the table of the Marquise de Pompadour — Madame du Châtelet was one of them — were not free from vice, they at least did not, as formerly, boast of it as meritorious.

Society was probably never more frivolous and

corrupt than from about the middle of the eighteenth century to the dawn of the Revolution. Its occupations were puerile; the conversation of the fashionable *salons* — as distinguished from the three or four philosophical and literary *réunions* — had degenerated into idle gossip, or the discussion of a budget of scandalous *on dits*. Yet at no time did the *haute société* so pique itself on its politeness — which was displayed in an overstrained *empressement*, that gave the idea of friends and acquaintances being intensely interested in each other, so long, of course, as they remained together. Society, with its falseness, its hollowness, its affected geniality, and deceptive mask of politeness, is described with much force and piquancy in Madame de Graffigny's "Lettres d'une Péruvienne."

The age of grand manners was especially that of Louis XIV. All the formal etiquette, which then kept ordinary mortals at a distance from the sacred person of the king, was yet rigidly observed at Versailles, and continued to be, far into the reign of the unfortunate Louis XVI. But the *grands seigneurs* of the middle of the eighteenth century were far less *grands* than those of the preceding one. The poets and *literati* now held up their heads in the society of princes. In the Louis XIV. period they hardly dared hold up their eyes; and before the magnificent Bashaw, himself, would have felt honoured to be per-

mitted to grovel on their knees — as some of the household still did when they drank the health of the "well-beloved." But the old *régime*, with its grand manners and stately politeness, was in its *décadence*. Nothing could restore its *prestige*, or prevent the spread of philosophism — destined to overthrow both it and the very artificial state of society under which alone it could continue to exist. Not that politeness was altogether extirpated as the formalities of the old *régime* died out; enough of it survived, and remains still, to entitle French society to be called the most polished and agreeable in Europe.

CHAPTER V.

The Young Chevalier. — A Very Gay Carnival. — Marie Josephe de Saxe. — A Weeping Young Bridegroom. — Court Usages Contemned. — Popularity of the Chevalier. — Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle. — Charles Edward Arrested. — "Comme le Temps Passe!" — Public Disapprobation. — La Messe à Londres — 1748.

N the 20th of September, 1746, a small French privateer, hovering near the coast of Scotland, was seen to run a boat inshore, and presently to receive on board a poor, weary-looking, weather-beaten wanderer. As soon as he had stepped on deck, he turned towards the inlet where he had embarked, and waved a handkerchief, as a signal, may be, that thus far all was safe, or, perhaps, as a final adieu. It was answered from the rocky heights above, as the little craft, crowding all sail, speedily got under way.

It was the gallant young chevalier, "Bonnie Prince Charlie," escaping from the land of his fathers. Since the fatal defeat at Culloden he had for five months wandered, a lonely fugitive, wounded, foot-sore, and weakened by fatigue; hiding by day in the wild ravines and caverns of the

Highlands; sleeping in crevices of the rocks, exposed to all weathers, when no hut was near to shelter him, and suffering from hunger and thirst. Gay, handsome, courageous, adventurous, romantic, his misfortunes kindled in women's hearts the deepest sympathy and devotion. Tracked from place to place, and a price set on his head, yet none, though abhorring him as a Papist, was found base enough to earn wealth by betraying him; but often, when recognized, he was furnished with some disguise that enabled him to elude the vigilance of pursuers.

On the 10th of October, the schooner, which had narrowly escaped capture by an English cruiser, made for the port of Roscof, near Morlaix. There, in a sailor's dress, the prince landed, and was soon on his way to Paris. He was received by the people with many acclamations, and was fêted and entertained at the Hôtel de Ville. The court also welcomed him with much distinction. Having rested from his fatigues, and recovered the good looks which his five months of hard living had somewhat marred, he created a great sensation amongst the ladies, who lost no opportunity of magnifying his deeds of arms, and extolling him as a hero of romance. So that Prince Charlie was the darling of the *belles* of Paris that season, as well as of the *belles* of Bonnie Scotland. And a very gay season it was — the gayest carnival that had been known for years.

Charles Edward Stuart, "Prince Charlie"

There was again a royal marriage on the *tapis*. The poor young dauphin had become a widower in the preceding July, and a second bride had been chosen for him ere his tears were dry for the loss of the first, to whom he had been greatly attached. While he wept and lamented silently and alone in his chamber, preparations were being rapidly urged on for court balls and plays, public festivities and rejoicings. Many were the intrigues which the unexpected death of the Spanish infanta occasioned. Each party strove to further its own interests at court by suggesting to the king a princess of its own choice.

The queen seemed to desire an Austrian connection. The Jesuits preferred an Italian bride — a niece, or other relative, of the Pope. But the Maréchal de Saxe, then so popular in France, and all-powerful with the king, proposed his own niece as dauphine, Marie Josephe de Saxe. She was the daughter of the maréchal's natural brother, the Elector of Saxony, Augustus III. of Poland, who had supplanted King Stanislaus. Both Marie Leczinska and the dauphin would have opposed this choice had they possessed any influence. Having none, their objections would only have met with a curt "*Je le veux*," for the king approved; and his decision once made, for good or for evil, he always abided by it. The young princess, however, was found to be both pretty and amiable; more lively and agreeable, the

court generally considered, than the grave and pious Spanish infanta. The feelings of the queen and of the still sorrowing dauphin were not unknown at Dresden, and accordingly the princess, well-trained in the part she had to play, evinced, on her arrival at Versailles, much tenderness towards the former, much sympathy with the latter.

It was the etiquette of the time that the bride should wear, in a diamond bracelet, the miniature of her father. The queen, having expressed a desire to see the portrait of Augustus — to whom Stanislaus owed so many of his troubles and years of poverty and obscurity — the young princess, presenting the bracelet, said, "*Voyez, maman, comme c'est ressemblant.*" It proved to be no miniature of Augustus, but one of the queen's father she was wearing. The dauphin, poor youth (he was but little past his seventeenth year), was unable to restrain his emotion and tears during the performance of the marriage ceremony. The princess perceived it. On the conclusion of the rite, addressing her weeping young bridegroom, she said, "*Laissez couler vos pleurs en liberté, Monsieur; ils m'apprennent ce que je dois attendre de votre estime, si j'ai le bonheur de la mériter.*"

This very prim, formal, set speech is found in all the histories and memoirs, authentic and otherwise, that treat of the events of that period. If

ever uttered at all — which, as with so many other silly speeches and sayings recorded as the wisdom of royalty, is doubtful — it proves nothing in favour of the young lady, except that she performed the part she had been taught remarkably well. She, however, knew so little of the French language, that on her arrival she was unable to make herself understood, and needed the services of a French teacher — far more than Marie Leczinska had once needed those of the academician Moncrif, to correct the inelegancies she had contracted from a *bourgeoise* instructress. The dauphin himself undertook to teach his bride French, and it was while pursuing their linguistic studies that the young couple fell in love. The disgust of the court may be imagined when the scandal was confirmed that the dauphine, of whom better things had been expected, actually was content to live happily with her husband in *bourgeois* fashion. It was shameful, thus to contemn the usages of the court and openly to reprove the king. What an unfortunate father! What an undutiful son! What a silly young bride!

None, perhaps, had more enjoyed the festivities of this brilliant carnival, or entered with more zest into the rather prolonged gaieties of the marriage *fêtes*, than Prince Charles Edward. He is said to have exhibited a fair share of French *légèreté*, and, while forgetting his own fatigues in the pleasures and dissipations of Paris,

to have evinced neither sorrow nor sympathy for the sufferings — far greater than his own — of those who had followed his fortunes and supported his cause. But at that time, as an opponent of England, he was popular in France with all classes — from the court to the people. The ladies, with greater admiration for his personal qualities, vied with each other in seeking his good graces. Amongst the *noblesse* many were willing, even eager, to form a matrimonial alliance with him. He probably thought that an honour too great to confer on any noble house. Royalty, though fallen, must wed with royalty, and the queen, with little reason, put an end to the hopes of many a *belle fille* by announcing that one of her daughters was destined for the prince.

But Madame de Pompadour began to be desirous of peace. The king, at her instance, had once more visited the armies, and the Maréchal de Saxe undertaken to bring about peace by new conquests. M. de Saint-Severin was sent to England to negotiate, while the maréchal besieged the strong places of Holland. The much desired peace, of which Madame de Pompadour, as first minister, took to herself the chief credit, though the precipitancy with which it was concluded met with much disapproval — France gaining nothing by eight years of war, but an addition of twelve million *livres* to her debt —

was definitely signed at Aix-la-Chapelle, on the 8th of October, 1748.

Immediately after, instead of giving Charles Edward his daughter in marriage, Louis XV. despatched the Marquis de Puisieux with an order to the prince to quit the kingdom. Several previous intimations had been given him that it was desirable he should voluntarily do so. He had chosen to disregard them. He now set at naught the king's order, and made the Parisians aware that he was to be ejected, in compliance with the demand of the English. At once his popularity increased, and he fancied that any attempt to use force to eject him would be resented by the people. He was, however, quietly arrested in the corridor of the Opera, precautions having been taken, as it was known he was armed, to prevent any resistance. The Marquis de Vaudreuil then conducted him to Vincennes.

After three days' confinement, the Comte de Maurepas was sent to apologize for the severity of this treatment on the ground of imperative necessity. Also to inform him that he was free to retire to any country he chose, on giving his word of honour not to return to France until the ministry had come to an arrangement with England on that point. The king — who had a liking for the young chevalier, and admired the chivalric spirit that would have led him, with very slight encouragement, again to strike a blow for the

English crown — is said to have much regretted that he could not act otherwise than rigorously towards him.

It appears, however, that an asylum in France might possibly have been conceded by the treaty had the chevalier been fully aware of the position of Madame de Pompadour. He paid his court to her as to a young and charming woman, who pleased the king, and whose energy and animation had given vogue to other entertainments in the dull court of Louis XV. than the customary dreary round of excessive eating and drinking. Her conspicuous talent and wonderful resource had enabled her to multiply and vary the amusements in a manner that excited his surprise and admiration. She had accomplished a task that the sagacious Madame de Maintenon confessedly had failed in — *celle "d'amuser un homme qui n'était plus amusable"* — having drawn from the king an exclamation on the rapid flight of time.

Oppressed by indolence and his own gloomy thoughts, it had been the habit of his life to complain that the days and the hours moved wearily on with leaden feet; but when his sluggish mind was awakened to take some degree of interest in the new amusements and pursuits created for him by the marquise, he had several times remarked, with surprise, *"Ah! comme le temps passe!"* The young chevalier did not know that the bodily fatigue and labour of brain

undergone by this accomplished lady were very far less the results of her love for the king than her love of ministerial power, and that she might probably have taken up his cause had he sought her in her "Bureau de ministère," instead of complimenting her, like other danglers at her *toilette*. He did not comprehend this, yet she treated him graciously — as she would any other *beau jeune homme*, whose misfortunes she pitied and whom she would have endeavoured to serve, had he asked her. She thought him a desirable acquisition to the general court circle; and when he went his way, she, as well as the king, bade him adieu with regret.

On the other hand, it has been asserted that Madame de Pompadour, aware that the prince confided in the generosity of Louis XV. to afford him — as promised before his embarkation for England — a refuge in France, should he need it, reminded the king of it when the arrest was ordered, and spoke warmly in the prince's favour. Louis is said to have been extremely annoyed by the urgency of her appeal, and to have replied, even angrily, "*Que voulez vous, Madame, que je fasse? Faut-il que j'épuise mon royaume parce que le séjour de Paris plaît au fils du Chevalier de Saint George?*" He was, in fact, supine only because France had no navy, and was in this respect powerless against England. The Parisian public, however, expressed their disapprobation of

the king's expulsion of the young chevalier in their usual mode of giving vent to their feelings and opinions. Epigrams innumerable, more or less keen and cutting, ribald jests, *chansons de Pont-Neuf*, assailed the ears of royalty — for by some means they always found their way to Versailles. At the theatres, every speech, every sentence of a play that could be turned into an allusion to the people's cause of displeasure, was seized on by the audience and applauded vociferously, none more so than the line —

"Il est roi dans les fers ; qu'êtes vous sur le trône ?"

There were many who would have had the king, at all hazards, go to war for the cause of the young Pretender, and believed the people of England to be so anxious to receive him that "a French corporal and three grenadiers could place him on the throne." But Louis XV. followed the wiser counsels of one who told him, "*Sire, c'est impossible ; et si Votre Majesté veut faire dire la messe à Londres, il lui faut cinq cent mille hommes pour la servir.*" Alas ! for Protestantism. What a change has since come over the spirit of the nation !

CHAPTER VI.

The Salon of Mdme. Geoffrin. — A Graduate of the Salons. — Marie Thérèse Rodet. — Les Glaces des Gobelins. — A Constant Dinner Guest. — Anecdotes of M. Geoffrin. — A Student of History. — A Bourgeois Household. — "La Fontenelle des Femmes." — An Aged Gallant. — A Cherished Antique. — The Pastorals of Sceaux. — "Le Grand Prosateur." — The Well of Ste. Geneviève. — A Joke of the Salons. — Le Sublime and le Frivole. — In Quest of Conversation. — From St. Louis to St. Honoré.

THE certain, though gradual passing away of the exclusiveness which had once been so rigorously observed in the *haute société* of the old French *régime* was nowhere more conspicuously marked than in the rapidly rising celebrity of the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin. It was already in great repute, and frequented by persons of rank and distinction, though Madame Geoffrin herself, both by birth and by marriage, could but be classed with the *moyenne bourgeoisie*.

"Her *salon*," says Sainte-Beuve, "was the best regulated, best conducted, and most firmly established, of any *salon* in France since the days of the famous Hôtel de Rambouillet. It was, in fact, one of the institutions of the eighteenth century." By the death of Madame de Tencin,

who for some time had been in failing health, and the more sudden and unexpected one of the Marquise du Châtelet, in 1749, two of the most distinguished of the literary and philosophical *salons* were closed. The *beaux esprits, gens-de-lettres,* philosophers, eminent *artistes*, and all who composed the social circle of those ladies, passed over, as if by right of inheritance, to the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin.

Not that an entirely new society was thus formed. There were indeed but few first appearances in her circle, but generally those who now became the habitual frequenters of her *salon* had before been but occasional visitors. "*Ah! la rusée petite femme,*" exclaimed Madame de Tencin, when, in her last illness, Madame Geoffrin assiduously visited her "*elle vient pour attrapper mes bêtes.*" The *bêtes* were considered as more rightfully the property of Madame du Deffant. Her *salon* had been established some years when Madame Geoffrin threw open the doors of her hôtel, in the Rue St. Honoré, and invited the *beau monde,* the philosophers, and literati to enter her *salon bourgeois* — destined shortly to eclipse all others and to obtain European renown. She was not then in the heyday of youth and beauty, but had arrived at that discreet period of life usually called middle-age, and which supposes a general expectation of completing a century — Madame Geoffrin was bordering on fifty. It would have

been late in the day to have acquired such widespread social celebrity had she only then made her *début* in society. But, possessed of ample means, she had for several years past been quietly receiving, and been herself well received by such leaders of society as Madame de Tencin, Mesdames de Forcalquier and Dupin, as well as in the limited but refined circle of Madame de Graffigny. She had graduated, as it were, in the *salons* of the *beau monde*. Being a keen observer, though but indifferently educated, she had acquired there the most charming ease of manner, and a dignified repose, that harmonized well with her pleasing personal appearance and her admirable taste in dress. She wore very fine laces, and the richest materials, either black or of subdued shades of grey; and, without departing conspicuously from the fashions of the time, modified them considerably to suit her age and her tall, slight figure.

As hostess, her tact was perfect, and she is said to have possessed in an eminent degree "*cet savoir vivre qui consiste à mettre chacun à sa place, et à s'y mettre soi-même.*" Her opinions were rather deeply tinctured with the prevailing philosophy of the age. But she had her *tribune*, or private seat, at the church of the Capucines, where the queen and the dauphine performed their devotions, as she had her box at the Théâtre des Bouffons and the Théâtre Français, where she sometimes received the visits of her friends.

This celebrated *dame bourgeoise*, who for twenty-five years was the centre of the most brilliant of the social, literary, artistic, and philosophic circles of Paris, was the daughter of a *valet-de-chambre* of the Duchesse de Bourgogne, the mother of Louis XV. Of a speculative turn, he had risked a small sum, and gained a very large one, when the Système Law was in operation. He was thus enabled to give a handsome dowry to his daughter, Mdlle. Marie Thérèse Rodet, when she married the thriving *bourgeois*, M. Geoffrin. He was the founder (or is generally so called) of the Manufacture de glaces des Gobelins,* also a lieutenant-colonel of the *milice bourgeoise*. This was an honorary post, without duties or emolument, which gave him a sort of importance in his own and his neighbours' eyes, but interfered not with his habits of industry and strict attention to the

* The actual founder of this establishment was Rivière-Dufreyny, who, in 1654, under the patronage of Colbert, obtained for it a privilege or patent, which he afterwards sold to a company. At that time the plates of glass were merely blown, and the largest did not exceed four feet in dimension. But in 1688 a method of melting the glass and running it into moulds was invented by Lucas de Nehon. This was done at a manufactory, on a large scale, at St. Gobin, in Picardy, the sheets of glass being sent to Paris for polishing, framing, etc. Better glass was obtained by this process, as well as mirrors of a much larger size. The Venetian mirrors, consequently, became less in demand. M. Geoffrin was, therefore, not the founder of the manufactory, but one of the founder's successors — though he may, probably, have made some improvements on De Nehon's process.

business by which he eventually realized a large fortune.

As there was something artistic in M. Geoffrin's occupation, it brought him in contact with persons of rank and wealth, with whom he became so far intimate that they did not disdain to partake of his liberal hospitalities — *recherchés*, dinners, etc. His tastes were so far in harmony with those of his wife, that he rather encouraged than checked her inclination for society and her efforts to form a distinguished circle of her own. M. and Madame Geoffrin connected themselves, if only in idea, with the *noblesse* by marrying their only daughter to the Marquis de La Ferté-Imbault. When M. Geoffrin, who was considerably older than his wife, either retired from business or gave up its management into younger hands, he became Madame Geoffrin's *maître d'hôtel*, and performed the duties of his office admirably.

For some years there sat at the bottom of Madame Geoffrin's dinner and supper table a dignified-looking, white-haired old gentleman, bland in his manners, but very modest and retiring; speaking only when spoken to, but looking very happy when the guests seemed to enjoy the good cheer set before them. When, at last, his accustomed place became vacant, and some brilliant butterfly of Madame's circle of "*visiteurs flottants*" — who perhaps had smiled patronizingly on the silent old gentleman — noticing his absence,

perchance, would carelessly enquire what had become of her constant dinner guest, she would reply, "*Mais, c'était mon mari. Hélas! il est mort, le bon homme*"—so little was the consideration shown to this worthy creature in his own house. Yet it both pleased and amused him silently to gaze on the throng of rank, fashion, and learning assembled in his wife's *salons*, and to witness her social success.

Numerous anecdotes are told of M. Geoffrin, of which one may well question the veracity. Evidently, this *bourgeois gentilhomme* was not fitted to play his part in society with the tact and easy grace that distinguished his wife. But it may be doubted whether a man, who for many years had successfully conducted an important establishment, requiring much intelligence in its management, was so nearly idiotic as many of these anecdotes seem to represent him. He is said to have been recommended to read a certain historical work, the first volume being then lent to him, and afterwards changed, as he supposed, through five or six volumes unto the end. The same first volume, however, was always returned to him, he reading it over and over again, quite unconscious of the joke of his friends. When asked his opinion of the work he said: "It was extremely interesting, though he had met with a few repetitions which the author, he fancied, might have avoided." Also he appears to have been a student of "Bayle's

Encyclopædia." But the book being printed in double columns, he read them together as one, often remarking that "it was a most abstruse work."

The President Hénault being one of Madame Geoffrin's faithful followers, M. Geoffrin thought it right to read his "Histoire Chronologique," and was much surprised, after a diligent perusal, to learn from it that Louis XIII. was not the son of Louis XII., and Henri IV. the son of Henri III., and so on. With this enlightened study of history, philosophy, and geography, his favourite subjects, he profitably employed the leisure hours of the evening of his life, the results being as amusing to his literary friends as they were interesting to himself. Yet he had brains, taste, and skill enough to produce in his manufactory the splendid mirrors that rivalled or surpassed those of Venice, and that formed some of the most tasteful ornaments of the royal palaces and hôtels of the *noblesse*—acquiring a handsome fortune by his industry.

The Marquis d'Argenson, a great frequenter of the *salons*, refers, in his "Memoires," though without mentioning names, to the household arrangements of M. Geoffrin, and the part he took in them.

"I could name," he says, "a certain household, the master of which is a man of very ample means, where the usual order of things in *bour-*

geois families is entirely reversed — the husband taking upon himself the duties of the wife; and he performs them well. He spends his mornings in settling accounts, ordering the dinners and suppers, and, with the aid of his *chef*, preparing the *menu*. The mistress of this establishment has the reputation of being *une femme d'esprit*. She is epigrammatic and sarcastic, without any ill-nature; but her husband, who is entirely at her orders, though he takes his place at her table, rarely ventures to utter a remark. He is, however, a strict man with his servants. If he perceives any neglect, or any defect in the repast, he reprimands them severely; and they respect him, though they also fear him. He has even been known to remonstrate with his lady wife when her expenditure, though she is a prudent woman, and he a liberal man, has seemed to him larger than necessary."

Notwithstanding these excellent qualities, the period of Madame Geoffrin's greatest celebrity was after her husband's death, when the large fortune came entirely under her own management. She has been called "*La Fontenelle des femmes*," her idea of happiness, like that great philosopher's, consisting in the absence of all disquietude in her social surroundings, and all disturbance of the serenity of her mind. But the desire to sail on summer seas, and to have the path of life spread with a velvet-pile carpet, is as little uncommon, even in these days, as it was in those of

Fontenelle and Madame Geoffrin. In her wish, however, that the even tenor of her life should run on smoothly and undisturbed, she was not so selfishly influenced as Fontenelle. Her happiness included the happiness of others; for she was kind-hearted and benevolent in the extreme —glad to be of service, assisting many with her purse, and, where that availed not, affording her hearty sympathy. Marmontel was one of her especial favourites; but, generally, she was interested in the success of young literary men, introducing them to the princes and courtiers who visited her; some such patronage, even then, having its value.

Fontenelle, at the age of ninety-four, was still a dangler in the *salons*. He was always considered parsimonious, never offering or expressing any willingness to aid a needy literary friend. Yet this was less, it would seem, from actual parsimony than from a determination to thrust from him all that was unpleasant to the eye or painful to the thoughts. But Madame Geoffrin frequently obtained from him large subscriptions for benevolent purposes. She would tell him of certain individuals in whom she was interested— well known to him in most cases — who had fallen into either poverty, or met with some catastrophe, and whom it was desirable to assist. He would express his regret or surprise, and his approval of her plans. When she would say,

"May I depend on you for forty or fifty *louis?*" "Certainly, madame," he immediately replied; "I thank you for reminding me of it." Fontenelle, therefore, should not be too harshly judged; for it is not every one who will do what is considered to be his duty simply by being reminded of it.

It was in Madame Geoffrin's *salon* that Fontenelle, wishing still to be gallant, although half way between ninety and a hundred, observing that a lady had dropped her glove, rose from his seat with the intention of presenting it to her. In attempting to stoop to pick it up, he fell forward on his knees. In an instant he was surrounded. Such a panic among the ladies! such a lamentation over their "*cher* Fontenelle!" For, as was remarked, "there was as much fussing over him in the *salons*, and as much care taken of him, as though he had been a rare work of art or a valuable piece of old china." On this occasion he was tenderly assisted to get up again on his feet, but not until he had on his knees, as he said, begged pardon of all those *belles dames* for his extreme *gaucherie*. "*Ah! mes chères dames,*" he exclaimed, "*que n'ai je pas encore mes quatre-vingts ans!*" At that youthful period of his life he would have picked up a lady's glove with alacrity. Now, alas! he was getting somewhat into years, and fair ladies must take the will for the deed.

The Marquis d'Argenson, after the death of Madame de Lambert, wandered from *salon* to *salon*, seeking peace, but finding everywhere a Babel of tongues. He was yearning for conversation, but in that self-asserting age there was nothing but talking. Listening had gone out of fashion with *la vraie politesse*. For his own part, he tells us, he had given up the quest, and had taken the resolution "*de s'éloigner et de se taire*." But old habits are often not easily overcome. D'Argenson himself was a great talker; but a talker of the old school. He did not carry with him to the social *réunion* a budget of scandal, determined, whether listened to or not, to leave none of it untold. He liked a long, learned disquisition, and preferred to take the leading part in it — more after the pattern of Rambouillet.

The last *souvenirs* of the Rambouillet days still lingered, it was said, in the château and gardens of Sceaux, where the Duchesse du Maine, setting at naught her threescore and ten years, still masqueraded with her guests. Chloés and Strephons, with their crooks and their lambs, would spend the soft twilight of the summer nights rambling in shady groves, reposing by purling streams, or supping in grottoes on white bread and honey, fresh fruits and cream, until the twittering of birds and the rosy hue of the eastern sky warned this party of imbeciles that it was time to confide

their bleating young lambs to the care of a real shepherd, and that they should return to the château — the ladies to repair the injuries done to patches and paint; the gentlemen to write sonnets on the little humpbacked duchess's beauty. The grounds of Sceaux were specially arranged for these pastoral frolics.

But it was not a travesty of the sentimentalities of the Rambouillet school that d'Argenson pined for, but something that bore a resemblance to its *salon causeur* — a modification of it, doubtless. Not one of those oratorical exhibitions by which Jean Louis Balzac, "Le grand prosateur," charmed a listening circle of pedantic and romantic *belles* and *beaux* — while the clever and amiable Madeleine de Scudéry played the part of the recording angel. Sitting at Balzac's feet, she noted down his eloquent words, the next post conveying them, in multiplied copies, to the furthermost limits of France.

Ah! M. d'Argenson, your sad, perturbed spirit will ne'er be at rest if, in the degenerate days you have fallen on, you seek in the boudoir of beauty, or the *salon* of an *esprit fort*, mental aliment of that substantial kind. A flavourless apology for it is reported to exist in the *salon* of the Marquise du Deffant. But this is an error. Her *ennui* has already *ennuyé* many of her former circle; and they have migrated to the hôtel in the Rue St. Honoré. The unfortunate marquise, to add to

her weariness of existence, is at this time threatened with blindness. Sad as is the infliction, an incident connected with it has been the occasion of much laughter and mirth in the thoughtless society of Paris.

Madame du Deffant, *un esprit fort*, and professedly without any religious belief, or, as she said herself, "believing in nothing," had secretly, with her friend, Pont de Veyle, gone to Nanterre, to drink of the well of Ste. Geneviève. There, miraculous cures of blindness and diseases of the eyes were supposed to take place when, after devotional homage to the statue, the waters were drunk with *faith* in the power and will of the saint to confer the boon applied for. Two of her acquaintances, happening to be travelling that way, had visited the well from curiosity; for usually it was surrounded by suppliants and devotees, who often came from afar to seek a cure for themselves or bring gifts to secure a similar favour for others. What, then, was their surprise to see the Marquis de Pont de Veyle among the throng.

He was not drinking of the miracle-working waters himself, but waiting for a woman to whom a draught had been handed — a stout, elderly woman, enveloped, as if for concealment, in an ample *manteau*, and wearing a close *capucine*. She proved to be the now nearly blind Madame du Deffant, who, while doubting the existence of

God, was not free from the superstition of supposing that some sort of godlike power dwelt in the image of a mythical saint. The marquise and her friend departed, unrecognized, as they believed; but the secret expedition to Ste. Geneviève's well was too good a joke to remain unrevealed by her *soi-disant* friends. It went the round of the *salons*, inspired many an epigram, and became the subject of much *badinage*, no pity, apparently, being felt for the infirmity which had been the cause of her weakness. She, however, determined, as day by day the gloom and obscurity increased, and darkness seemed closing around her, to leave for awhile the noise and the bustle and the giddy life of Paris, with the hope of finding relief in the quietude of a family château and her native air of Burgundy.

It was not then in the *salon* of the marquise that the fastidious d'Argenson could meet with conversation that pleased him. He went on carping at everything, finding fault with everybody, and confiding his discontent to the pages of his journal. "*Tout tombe en France*," he wrote, "and soon we shall have no good talkers in society; no good dramatic authors, either in tragedy or comedy; no good music or painting; no palaces built. Critics only will remain to us; for the age is becoming ignorant, and the greater its ignorance, the more it becomes critical and contemptuous." But d'Argenson was one of the severest

of critics; though he was but just when he designated the eighteenth century, "*Le siècle de perfection dans la bagatelle;*" adding, "*autant sommes-nous déchus dans le genre sublime, autant avons-nous montés dans le frivole.*"

He did not immediately recognize the great social merits of Madame Geoffrin, but thought it would have been more consistent with her position to content herself with being a good housewife, instead of aspiring to be a leader of the society of the *haute volée*. Her *point de départ*, however, being the possession of a large fortune — without which she could not, of course, have achieved European fame — she was fully justified in attempting to soar aloft as a star of the *beau monde*; feeling conscious, as she must have done, that she had, over and above her wealth, the qualities that would lead to success.

But d'Argenson, in quest of conversation, found it at last in the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin, and discovered in Madame herself one of the "good talkers," whose diminished number he lamented. Though it was well known that she was far from being learned, all who heard her relate any incident or adventure knew also "*qu'elle avait un goût exquis pour bien conter.*" She possessed, too, in an eminent degree, the talent, or art, of so animating and directing a conversation that all her guests should participate in it; and generally even the philosophers preferred the ease and gaiety of

her *salon* to the restraint of affected learning in that of Madame de Tencin.

The circle of the Marquise du Châtelet had been a very limited one. She was, indeed, scarcely missed in society, and certainly was not regretted, even by her *amant-en-titre* — Voltaire. He never mentioned his "sublime and respectable Émilie" after her death. And he did well. She was a pretentious bluestocking, a repulsive woman, and as little deserving to be complimented on her "respectability" as any of the *grandes dames* of that disreputable age. Her learned *coterie* contrived to discuss their mathematical problems no less satisfactorily in the Rue St. Honoré than in the Île St. Louis, as may well be inferred; for there awaited them there what the marquise usually forgot to provide for her *savants* — twice a week a good dinner; while every evening the guests of the *salon*, "*y soupaient gracieusement et à volonté.*"

CHAPTER VII.

Madame de Graffigny. — The Duchesse de Richelieu. — A Death-bed Scene. — An Affectionate Husband. — A Visit to the Château de Cirey. — Knickknacks and Objets d'Art. — "Lettres d'une Péruvienne." — "Lettres d'Aza." — M. de La Marche-Courmont. — A Sensitive Authoress. — D'Holbach and Helvetius. — Mdlle. de Ligneville. — A Philosopher in Love. — The Physician Helvetius. — A Rival of Voltaire. — The Epicurean Principle. — A Grateful Annuitant —Wonderful Moderation. — The Sweepings of a Salon.

WHEN, in 1734, the Duc de Richelieu married his second wife, Mdlle. de Guise, she was accompanied on her journey from Lorraine to Paris by Madame de Graffigny, the widow of Count Huguet de Graffigny, formerly chamberlain to the Duc de Lorraine, the father of Richelieu's young bride. The count was a man of the most violent character. In his paroxysms of rage he often ill-treated the countess, even threatened to take her life. After a few years of marriage, her health had become so much affected by her husband's brutality that she applied for, and obtained, a judicial separation. Shortly after, she was wholly released from her marriage-yoke of misery by the death

of the count in the fortress of Nancy — the fatal result of a quarrel with an officer of the Gardes du Corps having led to his imprisonment there.*

The gentle and amiable Madame de Graffigny grieved for the sad fate of her unworthy husband, and having, at about the time of his death, also lost her two children, was falling into a state of despondency. It was then that Mdlle. de Guise, with the approval of her friends, proposed to Madame de Graffigny to make the journey to Paris with her; and, after a little hesitation, she was prevailed on to accede to the princess's request. It was thus this distinguished woman, scarcely aware of her own mental gifts — for her life had hitherto been but a tissue of sorrows and troubles — was drawn from the seclusion of her home in Lorraine to become, some few years later, a star in the literary society of Paris.

She was, on her first arrival, extremely well

* Callot, the famous engraver, was the great-uncle of Madame de Graffigny. Louis XIII. invited him to France, to engrave for him the picture of the Siege of Rochelle, and of the Île de Rhé. When requested to engrave also that of Nancy, the capital of the Duchy of Lorraine, of which the king had taken possession, Callot refused. "I would rather," he said, "cut off my thumb, that I might never again take up the graver, than assist in perpetuating the memory of the misfortunes of my country, and of its prince, my sovereign." Louis XIII. was pleased with Callot's reply, and esteemed him for his noble sentiments. Louis had his *beaux moments*, though they occurred only at long intervals.

received in the *salons* of the *beau monde*, whither she accompanied the duchess, for the duke could not, of course, so greatly sin against the laws of *la haute société* as to appear there himself with his young wife. But he was not at all averse to the discreet Madame de Graffigny, to whom the duchess was greatly attached, playing the part of *chaperon* and keeping aloof all pretenders to the post of *ami intime*. This institution of polite French society he had an insuperable objection to, now that it threatened to interfere with his own domestic relations. But of all men in the world, who with so little grace as the Duc de Richelieu could raise his voice against it or appear to oppose it?

It was a maxim of the age to disbelieve in the fidelity of women, and though Richelieu had contemned both the fidelity and affection of Mdlle. de Noailles, his first unfortunate wife, he is said to have made some show of being really interested for the space of two or three months in the Princesse de Guise. His anxiety, however, on the vexed subject of an *ami intime* was soon set at rest. Undeserving as he was of any woman's affection, his second wife was as much devoted to him as the first, and rejecting as falsehood all the scandal afloat respecting him, believed herself also beloved. He smiled, therefore, on the weakness of his wife as he smiled on that of other weak women, complacently tolerated her

affection, but continued the same libertine course of life as before.

The duchess died at an early age, in 1740. "*Elle avait*," says a contemporary writer, "*l'âme calme et pure, de très beaux yeux, une physionomie douce, l'air d'une reine, et le caractère d'un ange.*" When Richelieu, hat in hand, politely came to take leave of her on her death-bed, she murmured with almost her last breath, "*Qu'il me serait doux de mourir dans vos bras.*" What could he do when he heard those dying words, and his eyes met the wistful gaze of hers? what — though he hated a scene — but lay aside his hat, approach the bed, and put his arm round this passionately fond wife? An expression of intense love and happiness momentarily lighted up her face. She strove to turn towards him, and in that dying effort breathed her last. Those who stood around — amongst them was Madame de Graffigny — were deeply affected. Not so de Richelieu. No starting tear dimmed his eye. But he did not play the hypocrite; feeling no emotion, he feigned none. Gently he withdrew his arm, took up his hat and silently departed — probably to keep some assignation.

After the death of the Duchesse de Richelieu, Madame de Graffigny, on whom the Emperor Francis I. of Lorraine had conferred a pension of considerable amount, fixed her residence in Paris, where in her modest *salon* the *élite* of the

learned and *spirituelle* society of the capital were accustomed twice a week to assemble. A year or two before, while on a visit to Nancy, she was urged by Voltaire and the Marquise du Châtelet to spend a week with them at Cirey. She wrote an account of her sojourn in that abode of philosophy, learning and love, and of the retreat which the sublime Émilie and her *ami intime* constructed for themselves and adorned as pleased their own fancy.

Voltaire appears to have done the honours, and to have conducted Madame de Graffigny through his own and the marquise's apartments. They occupied the new wing she had added to the old château, and to which entrance was obtained by the principal portico and grand staircase of the latter. The furniture and hangings of Voltaire's rooms were of rich crimson velvet. One of them, large, but not lofty, was panelled with tapestry and mirrors, the ceiling being formed of framed pictures. Adjoining was a gallery near forty feet in length, the windows of which looked on the newly planned gardens with their grottoes and fountains. It was fitted up like a studio — cases of books, mathematical instruments, writing-tables and chairs, and all the necessary appurtenances for writing and study. The walls were of light yellow wainscot, varnished. A stove was let into the wall, and concealed by a pedestal, on which was a statue of Cupid, with another of Venus on

one side and the Farnesian Hercules on the other — symbolizing, probably, the "*Émilie vous êtes belle*" of Voltaire, and "*c'était une merveille de force*" of Madame de Crequy.

The apartments of the marquise were hung with rich watered blue silk, bordered with gold fringe. The walls, everywhere wainscot, painted yellow with light blue stripes and varnished. Even her favourite pug dog's house was cushioned, curtained, painted and varnished light yellow and blue. Bathing-rooms the same. Voltaire seemed especially to admire the wonderfully numerous collection of "knick-knackery" his Émilie had amassed, and drew his visitor's attention to it. Every available corner and recess was filled with the then so much prized Chinese porcelain — Chinese monsters, vases, etc. The marquise had several cases of finely engraved gems and precious stones, some Paul Veroneses and other good pictures, beautiful wood-carvings and statuary. The library was extensive. But geometry, astronomy, and mathematics generally, being the *belle Émilie's* favourite studies, books on those subjects predominated.

With her admiration of a quantity of rich furniture, and a rather *pêle-mêle* arrangement of a large and varied collection of *objets d'art*, Madame de Graffigny ends her praises of that home of poetry and science, the Château de Cirey, every part of which, except the new suite of rooms, she

found dirty and uncomfortable in the extreme. But in all the palaces and hôtels of the *noblesse* at that period, the splendour of the reception-rooms was more than counterbalanced by the dirt and discomfort of the private apartments. What miserable holes were the courtiers on service at Versailles content, or compelled to be content, to sleep in and inhabit!

Madame de Graffigny's first published work was a tale, entitled "Le Mauvais Exemple produit autant de Vertus que de Vices," "Nouvelle Espagnole." It was written at the request of a literary coterie she had joined, each member of which undertook to write a short tale or romance. They were published collectively in 1754, the longest being Madame de Graffigny's. It was considered satirical, the title being a maxim only vaguely developed, it was said, but seemingly pointed at one or two persons, who felt themselves rather offended by it.

Withdrawing from this testy coterie, she wrote and published her "Lettres d'une Péruvienne." The success of this work was immense. It went through many editions, and at once established Madame de Graffigny's fame as the most elegant and eloquent prose writer of the female authors of France. It was soon after translated into several languages, and the Italians so greatly admired it that Madame de Graffigny was elected a member of the Academy of Florence. Montesquieu's

"Lettres Persanes" was the first example of this kind of satirical writing, and had numerous imitators. But the celebrated "Lettres d'une Péruvienne" is a work in a far more pure and harmonious style. A delicate vein of irony runs through it. The thoughts are original, clearly and gracefully expressed, and the character of the French and the manners of the period well defined. It is, indeed, a very charming romance, slightly sentimental, of course. As a story only, it is interesting and not too long.

With the "Lettres d'une Péruvienne," there is sometimes bound up another and shorter work, entitled "Lettres d'Aza ou d'un Péruvien, pour servir de suite à celles d'une Péruvienne." It was written after Madame de Graffigny's death by M. de La Marche-Courmont. He seems not to have been satisfied with the conclusion of the story, which leaves the reader to imagine the fair Zilia forgetting, probably, in time, her faithless lover, Aza, and rewarding with her hand and heart the devoted Captain Deterville, notwithstanding her vow to be eternally constant to the former.

M. de Courmont makes Aza repent and Zilia forgive. He reunites the lovers, and sends them back to Peru in a French man-of-war, ordered by the king for their conveyance. There is no charm of style in these letters. That of Madame de Graffigny is imitated; but Aza has not the

fluent pen, the graceful diction and playful irony of Zilia. One feels a sort of resentment towards this M. de La Marche-Courmont — who was chamberlain to the Margrave of Bareith — for his presumption in detracting from the charm of a pretty romance by attempting to decide what the author had chosen to leave doubtful.

The success of the "Lettres Péruviennes" was shortly followed by that of a five-act play, entitled "Cénie." It was in prose, and, after its first run of several nights at the Théâtre Français, retained favour for a number of years as one of the stock pieces of that establishment. "Ziman et Zenise" and "Phaza," one-act dramas, were written for and performed by the juvenile members of the court of Vienna. Unfortunately, Madame de Graffigny was so extremely sensitive that an unkind criticism or epigram — and the age was prolific of both — wounded her deeply. Her play, "La Fille d'Aristide," which was not so successful as "Cénie," gave rise to one or two of those silly jests that so often did duty for *bons mots*. The *amour propre* of the authoress suffered so much that she became seriously ill, and was compelled to lay aside her pen — then employed on another work — and it does not appear that she ever resumed it, except for the benefit of private friends.

It is surprising to meet with so extreme an instance of sensitiveness in one — herself a critic

— who so thoroughly comprehended the vivacity and levity of the French character,* and knew that the age, with all its boasted learning and philosophy, was but "the golden age *des littérateurs médiocres*," as Villemain describes it, and that though satire, as a contemporary authority (D'Argenson) remarks, *marchait toujours, il marchait à vide.*

Philosophers of the most advanced opinions met in Madame de Graffigny's *salon.* Such men, for instance, as the Baron d'Holbach and the younger Helvetius — both wealthy, of epicurean tastes (the former especially professing atheistical opinions), and whose works, "Le Système de Nature," and "De l'Esprit," produced some few years later on, were denounced as diabolical productions, and burnt by the public executioner. Yet both these so-called philosophers were amiable, kind-hearted, and benevolent men. If they spent much in luxurious living, they expended almost as much in kind and generous acts towards the needy. None sought a service from d'Holbach, or claimed aid from him, in vain. If, in his dinners and suppers, he strove to vie in costliness and *recherché* with the banquets of Lucullus,

* Zilia, in the "Lettres Péruviennes," characterizes the French as composed only of fire and air — having escaped unfinished from the hands of the Creator, she imagines, while the more solid ingredients for the organization of the human mind were preparing.

none the less did he vie with that noble Roman in the humane and compassionate feeling he exhibited. It is not recorded that he took him for his model, though possibly he may have done so.

There resided at this time with Madame de Graffigny, a very attractive young lady, Mdlle. de Ligneville, who, with a fair share of beauty, possessed also the advantages of a cultivated mind, an amiable temper, and much liveliness and wit. She was Madame de Graffigny's niece, and what in modern phrase is termed "highly connected;" numerously, also, being one of a family of twenty-two children. Many adorers would willingly have sought her in marriage; but when her legion of brothers and sisters was mentioned, also the hopelessness of any expectation of a dowry, candidates for the honour of her hand shrank back, and Mdlle. de Ligneville seemed likely to remain Mademoiselle to the end of her days. It, however, began to be remarked that M. d'Helvetius, no longer satisfied with unfailingly visiting Madame de Graffigny on her usual days of reception, was falling into the habit of looking in on other occasions, to make polite inquiries concerning her health.

Frenchwomen do not like these unexpected calls; it upsets all their plans. Be they whom they may, they prefer to know when to expect their friends; and to a literary woman like Madame de Graffigny, the intrusion was especially annoying. But Helvetius was perfectly content

to pass an hour or two *tête-à-tête* with Mdlle. de Ligneville in the *salon*, insisting that Madame, her aunt, should not on his account be required to leave her study. Soon it appeared that this dangerous young philosopher (Helvetius had fascinating manners, and was remarkably handsome) came not to philosophize, but to seek healing balm for a wounded heart.

The philosopher was in love; and being utterly indifferent to the number of brothers and sisters the fair Mdlle. de Ligneville might bring him, as well as equally indifferent to her want of a dowry, he, at one of their morning *tête-à-têtes*, asked her to be his wife. She did not refuse, and her family, of course, rejoiced greatly; while many an anxious mother, with daughters waiting for a husband to unbar the convent gates, turned pallid with envy — happily concealed by the fashionable thick coating of rouge — when they heard at what shrine the wealthy and fastidious Helvetius had been worshipping.

Hitherto so singularly prosperous in his worldly career, he was no less fortunate in his choice of a wife. Voltaire, with whom *les philosophes* were all "*grands hommes*," or addressed by him as such, wrote to the *grand homme*, Helvetius, some poetic lines of congratulation, and begged to be laid at the lady's feet, where he would certainly have fallen had he been present.

To the philosophical *réunions* and splendid ban-

quets, at which the most distinguished men of the time assembled, was now added the attractive *salon* of the charming Madame Helvetius. There, during the four months she and her husband were accustomed to spend every year at their magnificent hôtel in Paris, women of high birth and beauty, of literary and artistic tastes, or remarkable in the social circle for their *esprit*, loved to congregate.

It is singular that one who professed, and so fully carried out, the epicurean doctrine that the happiness of mankind consists in pleasure, should have owed to the favour of the pious, self-denying Marie Leczinska the opportunity of accumulating the immense wealth which enabled him to scatter his benefactions with so unsparing a hand, and to enjoy life so luxuriously. He was the son of the physician Helvetius, who recommended bleeding in the foot as a probable means of saving the life of Louis XV., when, during an illness which attacked him at the age of nine years, his death was hourly expected. Other physicians in attendance were strongly opposed to it; but Helvetius persisted in his opinion that it would have a favourable result, and explained his reasons for doing so. This converted two of his medical *confrères*, and his advice was followed. The king experienced relief from the operation, as Helvetius had foreseen, and speedily recovered.

The service rendered the king does not appear

to have had other reward than the grant of an apartment at Versailles, that he might be near at hand to watch over the royal patient's health. His circumstances continued as before, very far from affluent. He was a kindly natured man, and gave much time to visiting the poor in their sickness, and those frequently recurring calamities —pestilence and famine — which so thinned the population of France. When, six or seven years after, the king married Marie Leczinska, and her household was formed, Helvetius was appointed physician to the queen. Hearing of his former services to the king, she procured him a pension of 10,000 *francs*.

The younger Helvetius, as he grew up, rejecting his father's profession, was desirous of emulating Voltaire. He began very early to write poetry, or, rather, short pieces that passed current as such in that rhyming age. Subsequently, he brought out a tragedy, "Le Comte de Fiesque;" then took to the study of Locke, whose ardent disciple he professed himself. So highly did he appreciate his own productions that he expected their merit would ensure his reception as a member of the Academy of Caen, having been educated in the college of that city. Being but a mere youth, his pretensions were laughed at; but a year or two later influence was made for him, and, though still under the required age, the object of his ambition was attained.

On returning to Paris, Fontenelle became his idol. Madame de Tencin then bestowed her patronage on him, and in her *salon* he made the acquaintance and secured the friendship of Montesquieu and Voltaire, as well as the good graces of Madame du Deffant and other philosophical ladies. There was an elevation in his sentiments, a refinement in his manners, that pleased these leaders of society, and gained him favour also with his father's friends who were of the court circle of the queen. He already acted on his epicurean principle in the pleasant fashion of making himself agreeable to others in order to secure happiness for himself. And the principle was successful in its results. The queen became interested in the fascinating son of her worthy physician, and obtained for him the *charge* of fermier-général which gave him at once, at the age of twenty-three, an income of 100,000 *écus*, and the opportunity of accumulating millions.

But Helvetius did not follow the exacting, grinding system of most of the Fermiers généraux. Often he is said to have defended the cause of the oppressed people against the exactions of the Compagnie des Fermes. His office necessitating frequent journeys to the provinces, he was always accompanied by some needy friends, to whom it might be agreeable as a pleasurable excursion, as he travelled *en grand seigneur* and fared sumptuously every day. He was fond, too, of

giving pensions to those who would do him the pleasure of accepting them. Marivaux, the dramatist, received one of 2,000 *francs.* In return, he often behaved with the utmost incivility towards his benefactor, his generally unrestrained ill-temper and discontent arising from his setting a higher value on his plays than the *beau monde*, whose favour he anxiously sought, seemed inclined to award them. His excessive rudeness to Helvetius being on one occasion particularly remarked, the latter replied, "Oh! I overlook that for the sake of the pleasure he gives me by accepting a small annuity."

Helvetius had held his "*charge*" thirteen years when it occurred to him that marriage would contribute to his happiness. He was also delighted to find that he would have the further pleasure of making the young lady very happy on whom his choice had fallen, quite independently of his riches; though, to use Dr. Johnson's expression, he was "rich beyond the dreams of avarice." Strange to say, he thought himself rich enough, and before he married resigned his "*charge*." His wonderful moderation astonished M. Machault, Contrôleur des Finances. "*Vous n'êtes pas donc insatiable?*" he said. Most of the Fermiers généraux *were* insatiable, and Helvetius's resignation of so extremely lucrative a post was probably a solitary instance of the kind.

It must be left to the imagination to picture to

itself all the splendours of the wedding of Mdlle. de Ligneville and the wealthy epicurean philosopher. After receiving the felicitations of his friends and entertaining them in princely style, he and his bride left Paris for his favourite estate and château of Vore, in La Perche. There he hunted the wild boar and followed the roe, for he was fond of the chase, and made everybody happy around him. Or he passed his mornings, as we are told, in meditating and writing, preparing, in fact, the work that, inspired by Montesquieu's "Esprit des Lois," of which Helvetius desired to express his opinion, was afterwards to cause so great a sensation in literary society, and to give such a shock to his royal patroness. That work Madame de Graffigny pronounced "made up of the sweepings of her *salon* and a dozen or two of *les bons mots de ses gens*," but the philosophical world attributed it, in great part, to the caustic and atheistic pen of Diderot.

CHAPTER VIII.

L'Hospice Pompadour. — A Royal Visit to the Hospice. — Charles Parrocel. — The Flemish Campaigns. — Abel François Poisson. — The Marquis d'Avant-Hier. — Le Petit Frère. — Le Comte de Maurepas. — The French Navy. — The King Becomes Sallow. — Le Comte d'Argenson. — Madame de Pompadour as Minister. — Brother and Sister. — Le Docteur Quesnay. — A Remedy for Low Spirits. — Lessons in Political Economy.

TO celebrate the military prowess of Louis XV., Madame de Pompadour, after the battle of Fontenoy, founded at Crécy an hospital — or, rather, an almshouse with infirmary attached to it — for the reception of sixty poor, aged, invalid men and women, whose needs were attended to by twelve of the Sisters of Mercy of Saint Vincent de Paul. The château and domain of Crécy, near Abbeville, were a recent present from the king; but to obtain the necessary funds for the establishment of her hospital, the marquise had privately sold a part of her diamonds to Rambaud, the court jeweller, for near 900,000 *francs*.

When all its arrangements were complete, the hospital was intended to come as a surprise on the king; and it was expected that it would be interesting enough to dispel his *ennui* for awhile. Al-

ready, however, he noticed the unusually long and frequent absence of Madame de Pompadour from Versailles, and the oppressiveness of *ennui* would probably have soon yielded to a twinge or two of jealousy. But it chanced that the Comte de Vauguyon, who, it should be remarked, was one of the queen's intimate circle, had been paying a friendly visit to the fair Châtélaine of Crécy.

On returning to Versailles, court etiquette required that he should make his bow to the king. Always more anxious to peer into the private concerns of his courtiers than to give any attention to business of state, Louis's persistent questioning — for he saw there was a secret of some sort — led to the "Hospice Pompadour" being made known to him rather earlier than its foundress had proposed. Yet it may have been a mere ruse, to which the pious M. de La Vauguyon had seen fit to lend his countenance.

Whether or not, this charming piece of intelligence served its purpose as a new sensation for the king. For, some two or three days after, as the marquise, among her workpeople, was giving her final directions, and, like an able woman of business, examining with her builder the construction of the dormitories and seeing everything put into the very best order, the cracking of postilions' whips was heard. Soon there followed the sound of a bugle, then the roll of heavy carriages, the trampling of horses coming nearer and nearer, until

the royal retinue stopped before the Hospice Pompadour, and Louis XV. alighted.

He was *en habit de chasse*, for there was good sport to be had in the wide domain of Crécy; and the king purposed sojourning there for two or three days as the guest of the *belle châtelaine*. Besides his usual travelling attendants he was accompanied by M. Philibert d'Orry, Contrôleur des Finances,* l'Abbé de Bernis, the *protégé* of Madame de Pompadour, and M. de Berryer, lieutenant of police.

Never, perhaps, did the king more truly express satisfaction with any of Madame de Pompadour's numerous acts of kindness and benevolence than with this asylum for the aged and afflicted poor. She had proposed to dedicate it to him, designated as "L'Hospice Louis XV.;" and not the least of its merits in his eyes was that his private purse had contributed nothing towards it. M. de La Vauguyon had announced it as L'Hospice Pompadour, and that name, by Louis's particular desire, it retained.

Having completed her thank-offering for the victory of Fontenoy, the indefatigable marquise, as a lover and a patroness of the arts, determined to celebrate the valour of the king in a series of

* M. d'Orry, who had held his office fourteen years, was immediately afterwards superseded, M. Machault, an able minister, but a friend of the favourite and more complaisant, taking his place.

Maréchal de Sare

M.AL DE SAXE,

battle-pieces. He had been present, in the next campaign, at the victory of Laufeld, where, as before, the Maréchal de Saxe had commanded in chief. Signal successes at Bergen-op-Zoom had followed, and the siege of Maestricht had opened the way for peace. Charles Parrocel was, therefore, summoned to attend the marquise. He was the son of the famous Joseph Parrocel who painted the battle-fields representing the so-called conquests of the *Grand Monarque.* Charles had studied his art under his father, and painted well in the same style, but with the disadvantage of never having been asked to perpetuate on canvas the deeds of arms of any royal hero.

Within only two or three years of his death, fortune favoured him with the opportunity of transmitting his name to posterity as the worthy pupil of the elder Parrocel. For it was then he was commissioned by Madame de Pompadour to compose a series of scenes from the Flemish campaigns, in which, as a victor, the figure of the king should be prominent. She was probably influenced in her choice of a painter by her brother, though her own drawings and engravings evince the possession both of skill and judgment. He, however, was but lately returned from Italy, where, accompanied by Custrin, the engraver, and Le Blanc, the antiquary, he had been travelling with that able architect, Soufflot, for the completion of his artistic studies.

Abel François Poisson was a young man of remarkable abilities. He was four or five years younger than Madame de Pompadour, and extremely modest and retiring. Of principles of rectitude rare in those days, he was painfully sensitive to the dishonour attaching to what most persons thought the brilliant position of his sister. On the other hand, her favour with the king had procured his nomination to a post of influence, which, as he knew, would equally have been conferred on him had he possessed none of those qualifications that so eminently fitted him for it, or the tastes which made its duties so congenial to him. It was a post that brought him into official relations with the first artists of the day — painters, architects, sculptors, and most men of any artistic or literary eminence in France. Consequently, he had in his hands the bestowal of much patronage, and as the king also personally esteemed him, adulation beset him on every side.

In vain, however, were the solicitations of the courtiers or of Madame de Pompadour in favour of their *protégés*. He refused to ask anything of the king that did not concern his own department. The scruples of conscience from which he so often suffered he quieted by a determination to merit the office he held, faithfully discharging its duties, and never employing, or recommending for employment, any one of whose merit and ability he was not first fully assured.

He was created, at the age of nineteen, Marquis de Vandières. On his return from Italy, the appointment of Intendant des Batiments Royaux was conferred on him. He was then but twenty-three, and both the friends and the enemies of Madame de Pompadour subsequently acknowledged that, by the ability and aptitude he displayed, and the manner in which the functions of his office generally were performed, he had proved that no worthier choice could have been made. His title of De Vandières somewhat annoyed him; though with others he made a jest of it, as Le Marquis *d'Avant-hier*. It was changed by the king to De Marigny, or another title was conferred. Of this latter he said, "The fishwomen will now call me Marquis des Mariniers, and rightly so. Am not I a fish by birth?"

Madame la Marquise was not always quite pleased with "*le petit frère*," as she called her tall, handsome young brother. "He wanted tact," she said; so much so, that at times she almost regretted she had been the means of placing him in connection with the court. He would withdraw if he saw her at the theatre or the opera, to avoid hearing unpleasant remarks. This annoyed her. He passed his time, however, chiefly with artists, musicians, and men of letters. But sometimes he attended amongst the throng who paid homage to her at her *toilette*. Her keen eye then often detected the subdued displeasure, and

extreme disdain, with which he listened to the fulsome compliments of the servile herd of flatterers cringing around her. The king had adopted Madame de Pompadour's epithet of "*petit frère*," when speaking familiarly of De Marigny. From that time, whenever he was seen in the galleries of Versailles, immediately a crowd of courtiers surrounded him, so eager to claim his friendship, so interested in all his projects, and in whatever works of his own he had in hand.

Referring to these troublesome attentions and the unwelcome homage paid him, "If I chance," he would say, "to drop my pocket-handkerchief, twenty *cordons bleus* will immediately contend for the honour of picking it up." Millionaires of La Ferme générale offered their daughters in marriage; while to his *parvenu* escutcheon of De Marigny he might have added the thirty-two quarterings of an ancient house had he chosen to cast his eyes on *une fille noble* for a wife. Despising this adulation, cringing, and fawning, he retained his simplicity of character unperverted; appearing at court with a sort of "*embarras fier*," and remaining honest and honourable in the midst of corruption.

His susceptibility was often wounded by the scurrilous epigrams levelled at him by the Comte de Maurepas, Ministre de la Marine, la Marine being almost non-existent. Maurepas's relative, M. de Saint-Florentin, had held, with little credit to

himself, the office of Intendant des Batiments, now so satisfactorily filled by De Marigny; hence De Maurepas's vexation. His levity and indiscretion were proverbial; but when, turning from the brother, Maurepas attacked the sister with equal scurrility and with epithets far more offensive, she, who professed to contemn these licentious doggerel sallies — which passed for *esprit* in the *cabaret* circles where the sottish Piron and Panard presided — at once put an end to them. M. de Maurepas was required to resign his important appointment as the head of an imaginary navy, and to retire to his château, if he had one, there to repent of his folly.

At that time the office of Ministre de la Marine was hereditary in the Phelippeaux family, and Jean Phelippeaux, Comte de Maurepas, had succeeded to it at the age of fourteen. The youth of the minister was of little consequence; his post had become a sinecure. Neglect had almost annihilated the French Navy. During the administration of Cardinal Fleury the ships of war were left uncared for, to rot and perish in the ports.

"Sire," said the Maréchal de Belle Isle to Louis XV., when an invasion of England was projected, "I could immediately raise an army of five hundred thousand men to defend France against the nations of Europe combined; but where to find five thousand seamen to man the few ships that are left us to contend with an English fleet, I know not."

For twenty-seven years Maurepas had been at the head of this flourishing department of state. His frivolity had often amused the king, and in the course of these years of leisure he had written *chansons de Pont-Neuf* without number, *histoires scandaleuses*, epigrams in rhyme, which, for vulgarity and obscenity, might vie with the platitudes of Piron (now so admired by our great English wits of the nineteenth century). The buffooneries of Maurepas had, however, ceased to raise even a languid smile on the still handsome face of the royal *ennuyé*.

A rival had crossed the path of the Ministre de la Marine, and Louis soon began actually to yawn at the very sight of Maurepas. Perceiving that his favour was on the decline, he tortured his flighty brain to give animation to the desultory talk called transacting business with the king. Yet he was not a little surprised when he received his *congé*. Probably he would have been even more so had he known that the deterioration of the king's fine complexion was one among the many private reasons that induced his dismissal. Day after day the marquise exclaimed that "*le beau teint de sa majesté devenait jaune*." Maurepas's inaptitude for business produced the weariness, she thought, that occasioned those jaundice tints. No improvement, however, took place until the Pompadour ministry was formed.

One obnoxious member only of the old cabinet

yet remained, the Comte d'Argenson. His influence, though far less than that of the marquise, was still powerful with the king. He had become accustomed to the count, and Louis's indolence, and a certain timidity that accompanied it, made him ill at ease with new people. The Duchesse de Châteauroux had demanded his dismissal as a condition of her return to Versailles. The king promised compliance. But her illness ensuing in death, D'Argenson retained his office, the king not sharing the duchess's resentment. So unwilling was Louis to part with his minister that, although there were few requests he would have denied his present *belle maîtresse*, he prayed her to do him the favour not to urge him again on that point. D'Argenson made himself very agreeable to the king, though he was the declared enemy of his mistress, and a favourite of the Jesuit party of which the dauphin was at the head. The result of the king's unwonted firmness was a truce between the mistress and the minister.

In her private *Cabinet d'étude* the affairs of the nation were fully discussed, and intricate business of state explained to her. Her great intelligence and ready and acute perception of the difficulties, or varying aspects, of a question in the course of its discussion, and their bearing on the political situation of France, as concerned both her domestic policy and relations with foreign countries, were remarkable. They won for her many friends, and

as many admirers of her mental gifts, among the men of ability, the aid of whose counsels she sought, as they raised up enemies among those who had not expected to find an able minister of state in an accomplished, fascinating woman, ambitious only of homage, as they imagined, and of enjoying the pomps and vanities of a court.

It was the duty of the king to work with his ministers, and he possessed sufficient ability and judgment to have been something more than the mere cipher he was in the council chamber. But mental indolence made him averse to trouble himself with the affairs of his kingdom. Madame de Pompadour sought to counteract this by taking advantage of any opportunity, as regarded either time or a favourable mood of mind, of placing before him a digest — clear, precise, succinct — of every important question in state affairs. She was careful before all things not to weary him; and she had the talent of rendering her conversation with him on the business of the nation interesting, easy and pleasant.

"*Les femmes, seules,*" remarks Capefigue, "*sont aptes à saisir les joies et les faiblesses dans l'esprit de l'homme, et ces nuances qui échappent aux esprits sérieux.*"

The life of Madame de Pompadour was a life of labour, thought, and care, eventually undermining her health and bringing her to a premature grave. We know, of course, that the real object of her

unceasing exertions was the retention of political power, the keeping of the sceptre of France firmly in her grasp. This only could be done by retaining, undiminished, her immense influence over the weak mind of the king, who was surrounded by flatterers of both sexes, all eagerly watching for her downfall. But he had allowed her to place her yoke on him, and seemed well content to wear it, for he appreciated her great talents for governing, and the industry which he himself had not. The business of her life was, therefore, to make her yoke so easy, so pleasant, and, from habit, so necessary to him, that an effort to shake it off should be an effort that would give him real pain.

The young Marquis de Marigny interfered not at all with what may be termed the political life of Madame de Pompadour. There was in that respect a wide gulf between them, but in their talents and accomplishments, and their love of the arts, their tastes were in harmony, and the private circle of the brother was, with few exceptions, that of the sister. Her happiest hours were probably those they spent together in her private apartments with artists, musicians, and men of letters. Sometimes with only the friends of their earliest years — Pâris-Duvernay and the Abbé de Bernis, or with le Docteur Quesnay, the founder and patriarch of the philosophical sect, the "*Économistes*" — whose doctrines, as applied to the administration of government, were professed

and advocated by the elder Mirabeau in his "L'Ami des Hommes," and afterwards by Turgot and Malesherbes.

Quesnay was Madame de Pompadour's physician, and had an *entresol* apartment assigned him in the palace as a residence. Though inhabiting Versailles or, when in Paris, the splendid Hôtel d'Évreux (now Élysée Bourbon — so interesting in its historical associations, and which the marquise had lately bought of the Comte d'Évreux for 650,000 *francs*), Quesnay meddled with no court intrigues. He paid his daily visit to his patient, whose then languid spirits were but the forerunners of the gloom and *tristesse* of a mind diseased. Though brilliant in society, when alone with her thoughts she was oppressed with melancholy deeper than the king's. She had fully awakened from her dream of finding happiness in the splendours of a court and as the favourite of the king.

"*Le charme est fini*," she writes to the Comtesse de Noailles, "*Je ne trouve plus dans mon cœur qu'un vide immense que rien ne peut remplir.*"

Quesnay, who was eloquent on no other subject than rural economy, did his best to cheer the spirits of his fair patient by explaining to her the advantages to be derived from free trade in grain, and the impetus commerce would receive when his system should be practically adopted. Turgot, Diderot, Helvetius, d'Alembert, and Marigny

would often discuss the theories of Quesnay for hours together in his *entresol*, and, when in Paris, far into the night. Some three or four years later, the Marquis de Mirabeau became one of Quesnay's most zealous disciples.

The economistic theory of Quesnay was a singular remedy for low spirits, but appears to have been generally successful with Madame de Pompadour. She confessed that, although willing to respond to his anxious wish that she should become a proselyte to his views, yet she could never comprehend what he called his "chain of axioms," so irresistible, as he told her, in their evidence.

The "net products" also — the result of his own and d'Alembert's careful calculations — remained an unsolved mystery to her. But the eagerness and warmth of the philosophic doctor, when he got well into his subject, greatly amused his patient, and the conclusion of her lesson in political economy was usually a hearty laugh. As a physician, this may have pleased him, though as an enthusiastic "*Économiste*" he was probably disappointed.

CHAPTER IX.

Rousseau's Prize Essay. — Rousseau, un Vrai Génevois. — Rousseau's Theories Refuted. — Voltaire et L'Homme Sauvage. — A Morbid State of Feeling. — Thérèse Levasseur. — Jean Jacques's Second Essay. — Diderot and Jean Jacques. — The Trowel *versus* the Pen. — "Le Diable à Quatre." — L'Homme Sauvage en Société. — Jean Jacques, Aime ton Pays. — An Abjuration.

IDEROT had published, in 1746, his "Pensées Philosophiques," an atheistical work, for which he was shortly after arrested and conveyed to Vincennes. Confinement had so irritating an effect on the violent temperament and ill-regulated mind of this great genius that there were symptoms of the probability of his imprisonment ending in madness. To avert so great a catastrophe, the lieutenant of police suggested his discharge, and, after some little hesitation in high quarters, Diderot was set at liberty. His "Letters on the Blind for the Use of Those who See" then promptly appeared, and procured him a lodging in the Bastille, where the philosophic brotherhood visited him, apparently without restraint.

Among them, in 1749, Jean Jacques Rousseau

daily presented himself, his sympathy for the captive philosopher inducing him to make an application in his favour to Madame de Pompadour. No notice was taken of it. Indeed, the writings of Diderot, except perhaps his notes and criticisms on the pictures and painters of his day, are as repelling, as he was himself personally coarse and repulsive.

It was on one of his daily visits to the prisoner of the Bastille, that Jean Jacques, chancing to take up the "Mercure de France," saw an announcement of the Academy of Dijon proposing as the subject of a prize essay, for open competition, "What is the Influence of the Sciences and Arts on Morality?" Rousseau determined to compete for this prize, but was undecided whether to depreciate the sciences or to exalt them, to denounce the arts as fatal to virtue or to maintain that their influence was beneficial to mankind. On his way back to Paris he sat down under a tree to reflect on the subject. The result was the sophistical essay which gained the prize of the Dijon Academy and brought him prominently into notice in Paris. That Rousseau wrote from conviction, of course, no one believed. Yet it was necessary that arguments in support of such sophisms as the delights of savage life and the blissfulness of ignorance should be, or appear to be, forcible — commending themselves to the imagination, at all events, if not to the understanding.

Being drawn from the imagination, they imparted a sort of fervour and eloquence to the advocacy of his novel views of happiness. Yet it is probable that the essay would have passed altogether unnoticed had he treated his subject more rationally. His style was not like that of Voltaire, in itself attractive, for, as recently observed,* no Swiss writer of eminence is so little French in his style as Jean Jacques. "*Il fut un vrai Génevois.*"

When his essay appeared, the French philosophers, and society generally, believed that they had attained the highest point of civilization and social refinement, and that it was attributable to the immense development and progress of the sciences and arts. Rousseau's affectation of seeing in them only the source of every ill amused that novelty-loving age as a pleasant *jeu d'esprit*, none the less pleasant because disguised by an air of seriousness.† Judging from his subsequent conduct, and from much that he afterwards wrote (for previously he had professed to love Italy, "*à qui, disait-il, l'Europe doit tous les arts*"), Rousseau's one great object was to draw attention to himself, and, before all things, to be talked about. And he succeeded.

* In the *Revue Suisse.*

† King Stanislaus, however, amongst his poets, and surrounded by painters and sculptors, whom he had invited to his court to embellish the palaces and public buildings of Nancy and Lunéville, was indignant with Rousseau, and took up his pen to reply to his arguments and to refute them.

Henceforth, or at least for a time, until he became too savage, he was to be met at the sumptuous dinners and suppers of Baron d'Holbach and Helvetius. Also, at the *réunions* and bachelor dinners given weekly by the young Comte de Frise — a nephew of the Maréchal de Saxe — to whom Baron Grimm was then secretary. (De Frise had inherited a princely fortune while yet a mere youth, and dissipated nearly the whole of it in gambling and riotous living, smallpox soon putting an end to his libertine career.) It was then that Jean Jacques became so intimate with Grimm, who was musical and accomplished, and, being much sought after in the society of the court, often procured for his friend employment as a copier of music. For Rousseau had given up a situation of *caissier,* obtained for him by the nephew of Madame Dupin, and adopted this precarious method of gaining a living.

To Voltaire — of whom little was seen in Paris after the death of Madame de Châtelet, and the still more afflicting circumstance of Crébillon being received with favour by Madame de Pompadour — Rousseau sent a copy of his essay. In a letter of thanks containing many flattering expressions, he jestingly remarked that, while reading it, he had felt the strongest inclination to walk on all fours. "*Jamais,*" he says, "*a-t-on mis tant d'esprit à vouloir nous rendre bêtes.*" Rousseau took great offence at this. He had before been

an admirer of Voltaire; henceforth he became his enemy.

Though everywhere welcomed with much cordiality, he was far from being at ease in the society he now frequented. Under a modest and reserved exterior, and timidly polite manners, there lurked pride, distrust, envy, and resentment. The luxurious banquets of d'Holbach, the elegancies that surrounded the *spirituel* and refined Helvetius, displeased Jean Jacques. There was no geniality in him. Unaccustomed to any society but that of the vulgar and illiterate Thérèse Levasseur and her mother, he felt conscious that he was out of his place, and sat moodily silent in those animated circles, glancing around him furtively and askance, yet keenly observant of all that took place. "No one," says Marmontel, "ever more persistently put into practice the miserable maxim, 'One should live with one's friends as if they were some day to become one's enemies,' than did Rousseau."

The indigence into which he had fallen on his return from Venice, in 1745, may have greatly contributed to deepen his naturally morbid state of feeling, which with increasing years seemed to grow deeper still, embittered his life, alienated his friends, and deprived him of much of the legitimate reward of his literary labours.

Whether owing to his business occupations, or that he had not been able to obtain for it an advantageous hearing, "Le Devin du Village," if

finished, had not yet been produced. Some of its songs and airs he was accustomed to sing and play wherever he found a *clavecin* to accompany him. Generally they were thought pleasing and pretty, though Rousseau's voice was thin and harsh, and little calculated to add any charm to his music. Duclos, however, spoke of it favourably to Madame de Pompadour, and, soon after Rousseau's Dijon success, his operetta was performed at Versailles, and again at Fontainebleau.

All who were present, amongst whom were the queen and the princesses, were charmed with it. The marquise sang the airs, which became popular; and the king was so well pleased with them that he desired to see the composer. But the composer, though puffed up with vanity at the success of his musical trifle, shrank from an interview with the king, nothwithstanding the sharp goadings of Thérèse. Her displeasure with "*son homme*" was expressed with an eloquence that a *dame de la Halle* might have envied. She, poor woman, saw a pension looming in the distance, and perhaps her children reclaimed from among "*les enfants trouvés.*" And a pension, at the instance of the marquise, might have been granted had Rousseau but temporarily dispelled Louis's *ennui* by appearing before him in his Armenian caftan and robes —a not undignified costume when appropriately worn, though it transformed poor Jean Jacques into an eccentric figure of fun.

The Academy of Dijon again, in the following year, proposing a subject for a prize essay, "The Origin of the Inequality among Mankind," Rousseau once more took up his pen. The prize was not on this occasion decerned to him. But his generally perverted views, and the plausibility with which he sometimes presented them, together with the singularities of his conduct, sufficed to fix attention upon him. Curiosity was therefore sure to be raised by whatever he wrote. He became the fashion in the *salons*. Society, desirous of taking a near view of the gentle savage, made a lion of him, sought after and courted him.

His head was nearly turned by his imaginary social success. He gave himself extraordinary airs, and sulked and pouted when he thought he was not made enough of. The ladies coaxed and petted him, but laughed at him behind his back, as men might do when flattering a vain, capricious, pretty woman, whose excessive *amour-propre* was ever in danger of being disquieted by any fancied lack of attention and admiration.

He suffered far less in the more congenial society of Thérèse. She recalled him to his senses when he returned home in a fashionable fit of the vapours. His wounded feelings received but rough treatment from his wife, "*à la face du ciel et de la nature*," but whom the *salons* refused to acknowledge. Thérèse had feelings, also, and was not sparing of strong epithets

when she thought of the wrongs he had done her.

Since Jean Jacques had frequented the *salons* of the *beau monde*, he had often chanced to meet the young Marquis de Marigny, who, like himself, though from different motives, and in a different manner, maintained a certain degree of reserve in society. Rousseau seems to have felt attracted towards him, and, in his awkward, shy way, inclined to a more intimate acquaintance. Diderot, his former bosom friend, since his release from durance vile had evinced strong symptoms of jealousy of Rousseau's notoriety. Cold, caustic, also ready to take offence "*pour des fadaises*," as Marmontel says, Jean Jacques had become incomprehensible to Diderot.

When, too, he considered the strange doctrines he now put forth, his desire, as it seemed, to found a sect whose aim should be to arrest the progress of civilization, to turn its course backward, as it were, preaching as happiness to men gifted with intellect a state of nature, what could he think but that Jean Jacques was a madman? "*Cet homme est un forcené*," he exclaimed. One or other of these men must have been very much changed to have made intimacy, much less friendship, possible between them.

But Diderot was now fully engaged with d'Alembert in preparing for the first issue of the Encyclopædia; while Rousseau, influenced probably by

a musical reputation and a preference expressed for Italian music, had made the acquaintance of Marigny. The young marquis, as Jean Jacques, doubtless, was aware, was the first to patronize Sédaine, "Le restorateur de l'Opéra Comique." Sédaine was a stone-mason, and a skilful workman, probably, being entrusted with the reparation of the marble fountains of the gardens of Versailles. While thus occupied, he one day contrived to enter into conversation with Marigny, in the course of which he informed him that he purposed shortly to give up the stone-mason's tools and take to the pen. Marigny smiled.

"Better keep to the trade you are master of," he said, "than leave it for one you have to learn."

"It is for the Opéra Comique I propose to write," he replied. "Allow me to read to you the play I have written."

Permission was readily given. Sédaine read his piece, afterwards so popular — "Le Diable à Quatre" — and Marigny no longer doubted, as he said, the stone-mason's ability to use the pen as skilfully as the trowel. The music of his next piece, "Le Roi et le Fermier," was composed by Marigny, and proved a great success. Marigny was an accomplished *amateur*, and Sédaine, it is scarcely necessary to say, became the most popular of the writers of vaudeville and operetta, far surpassing Panard, sometimes called the "La Fontaine of vaudeville." Sédaine's pieces possess

an interest quite independent of the music, though he was usually fortunate in his musical *collaborateurs*.

Marigny's receptions were especially artistic and literary, without any pretension to philosophism, and were occasionally attended by Jean Jacques. It was, however, scarcely consistent with his professed opinions on the subject of the sciences and arts to frequent a *réunion* composed almost entirely of persons who made them their principal study. It was evident, notwithstanding, that he had a predilection for their society.

Madame de Pompadour was anxious to see this advocate of the life of the backwoods. A special invitation was therefore sent to him for a reception at which ladies would be present, and Jean Jacques duly made his appearance. He wore a cloth coat, *couleur noisette*, and of the cut then *à la mode*, linen, fine and white, cambric *cravate*, without lace but nicely plaited and got up by Thérèse, no ruffles, small round wig, no powder, silk breeches, maroon-coloured stockings, silver shoe and knee buckles, and cane in his hand — *un vrai petit-maître*. Though supposed to be always out of health, his complexion is described as ruddy, his features peculiarly Swiss.

On his introduction to Madame de Pompadour, his manner was flurried and nervous. Desirous of playing the bear, he was yet restrained by a wish to behave with politeness to this fascinating

and all-powerful lady, the more so, perhaps, that he was conscious of being decked out as if for making conquests that evening. Indeed, some ladies were heard to declare that "*l'homme sauvage*" was really "*un fort joli garçon.*" "Le Devin du Village" was, of course, the first subject of conversation. Madame la Marquise so much admired "*ce charmant petit-opéra*" that Jean Jacques was delighted. Vanity tore off his bear-skin and compelled him to behave far more like a civilized creature than was his wont, singing and playing, first at his own suggestion, then at the request of the marquise, several pleasing *chansonnettes* and pieces of his own composing.

It is probable that Rousseau might have acquired a fair reputation as a composer had he applied himself more steadily to the scientific study of music while in Italy. But he seems to have remained satisfied with the reputation of a clever *amateur*, which his "Muses Galantes" and "Le Devin du Village," with some few *chansonnettes* and short pieces for the *clavecin*, had gained him. His introduction to Madame de Pompadour led to no results as regarded his future career, and shortly after it he left Paris for Switzerland.

"*Jean Jacques, aime ton pays,*" had been his father's oft-iterated counsel to him in boyhood, and it may have recurred to him when, after an absence of many years, he determined to revisit the land of his birth. The "Citoyen de Genève,"

as it was his custom to sign himself, was well received by his *concitoyens.* The fame of his pamphlets and music had preceded him. But his public renunciation of the Roman Catholic faith and return to Protestantism were more particularly gratifying to them than those first literary efforts — soon to be succeeded by others that eventually raised a tempest of ill-feeling against him, and caused his ejection from the land that now welcomed his return.

CHAPTER X.

Anglo-mania. — A New Source of Favour. — The Wines of Bordeaux. — A Present from Richelieu. — Château-Lafitte Promoted. — A Challenge to Burgundy. — The École Militaire. — Its Real Projector. — L'Hôtel des Invalides. — The Academy of Architecture. — The Rubens Gallery. — Vernet's French Seaports. — Jean Honoré Fragonard. — The Painter Chardin. — The Queen's Oratoire. — The Winner of the Grand Prix. — Advice to a Young Artist. — An Admirable Plan. — Funds not Forthcoming.

GENERALLY, it may be said that, throughout the long reign of Louis XV., industry and commerce were slumbering. Yet there were intervals of partial awakening from this state of inactivity, of which the most notable was from 1748 to 1756, the period that elapsed between the signing of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle and the beginning of the Seven Years' War. Considerable progress was then made, as well in the arts and sciences as in the manufactures of the country. In its social aspects, it was also a brilliant period — a bright gleam from the fast-setting sun of the old *régime* — luxury in dress, in furniture, in equipages, everywhere meeting the eye.

In certain circles, inoculated by Montesquieu,

Voltaire, and others with what was termed Anglomania, many took the opportunity afforded by the peace of visiting England. Fine ladies and gentlemen set out for "the tight little island, the land of freedom," and the refined court of George II., with very high expectations. They returned, alas! with the enthusiasm of their feelings somewhat chilled. *En revanche,* foreigners of distinction, and especially Englishmen, thronged to Paris. Young noblemen frequented its *salons,* "to form themselves" in these schools of *la grande politesse* and perfection of taste.

The Duc de Richelieu, now well on the road from fifty to sixty, and, as some assert, with a deep tinge of red in his nose that annoyed him exceedingly, was still held up as the model of a fascinating libertine. One may learn from Lord Chesterfield's letters how this worthless old rake —for it is he who is alluded to as achieving so much social success with no higher claims than his *belles manières,* and his affectation of homage to women — was still courted in the *salons.* Every post he had held throughout his career, whether military or diplomatic, had been conferred for no merit, but was obtained through the intrigues and persistent support of his phalanx of female partizans. But the wars were over, at least for a time, and the worthy duke was now at full leisure to slay ladies' hearts and to pursue his drawing-room conquests.

At this opportune moment of *fêtes* and banquets, a lucky chance presented itself of increasing his favour with the king. It won him also the thanks of the court, and even of the philosophic band of diners-out. The king, who unfortunately could not be prevailed on to stint his libations to the rosy god of wine, was at this time supplied by the duke with a new sensation of that kind, which also very shortly after became the means of imparting new zest to the Apician repasts of the rich Baron d'Holbach, of Hénault and Helvetius, and the tables of the wealthy generally.

A sudden thought one day struck the languid, melancholy Louis, when Richelieu, after a short, dreary, and almost silent interview, was taking his leave of the king.

"Do your Bordelais vineyards, Richelieu," he said, "produce any drinkable wine?" and "*Le bien aimé*" raised himself from his reclining position, as though reanimated by the mere sound of the word wine.

The duke, recalled, as it were, to the presence of his august sovereign, replied:

"Sire, there are growths of the country which yield wine not exactly bad. There is what they call in those parts 'Blanc de Sauterne,' a very palatable wine, by no means to be despised. Then they have a certain 'Vin Grave,' which has a strong odour of flint-stone, and resembles Moselle, but keeps better. Also they have 'Médoc' and le

'Bizadois.' But there is especially one kind of red wine which the Bordeaux people boast of and praise so extravagantly that your majesty would be much amused to hear them. Were one to give heed to their *gasconnades*, one must suppose that the earth produces no wine that equals it; that it is, as they say, 'Nectar for the table of the gods.' Yet this much-lauded wine is neither a very potent nor generous one; though its *bouquet* is not bad. In its flavour there is a sort of indescribable, dull, subdued sting or mordant, and it is not at all disagreeable. For the rest, you may drink as much as you please of it. It sends you to sleep, that 's all; and, to my mind, that 's its chief merit."

The description of the wines of Bordeaux seemed to satisfy his majesty, but created no desire to taste them. His favourite sparkling *vin* d'Ai was still, to his fancy, the royal wine, fit for kings and princes, and *les belles dames de sa cour*. Richelieu, therefore, went his way without any order for claret. Two or three weeks after, however, there arrived at Versailles a messenger of the duke's from his château near Bordeaux, bringing with him some dozens of the famous red wine so vaunted by the Bordelais. The messenger had been despatched post-haste to fetch it from the duke's cellars, that the king's curiosity concerning Bordeaux wine might be better gratified by tasting it.

A cork was drawn. His majesty tasted, and

tasted again, after the manner of *connoisseurs*. He then drank a glass, hesitated for awhile, but pronounced it "a passable wine," and the "*bouquet*," as Richelieu had said, "*pas mal*." Half an hour's reflection produced a desire to taste again —the king wished to be just. He liked the *je ne sais quoi* in its flavour better, and ended the process of doing it justice by liking it remarkably well. After a second bottle, he unhesitatingly agreed with the Bordelais that their Château-Lafitte was fit for the table of the gods; and, higher honour still, fit to grace the table of the *petits-appartements* of the King of France and Navarre. Henceforth to that honour it was promoted.

Its fame soon spread. For it had not been tampered with; not prepared (*vous comprenez*) by skilful hands, as for the present educated taste of the *connoisseurs* of the English market. The wines of Bordeaux now took their place on the tables of the wealthy. But until thus brought into favour, through this present to the king of Château-Lafitte from the Duc de Richelieu's cellars, no one would have thought of offering his guests the wine of Bordeaux, so little was it known or esteemed beyond the district of its growth.

It was doubtless brought forward to play its part at the banquets, public, private, and royal, which, in 1751, were given in celebration of the birth of a son to the dauphin. Then Château-Lafitte, publicly representing the vineyards of

Bordeaux, was as a herald throwing down the gauntlet of defiance to a rival, maintaining, in the face of all who dared dispute the fact, the pre-eminence of their produce, as bumpers were filled, and the guests, with three times three, drank to the health of Young Burgundy.

The eldest son of the dauphin received at this time the title of Duc de Bourgogne. Louis XV., though disliking his son, was really well pleased at the birth of this child. It seemed to ensure the direct succession to the throne. The enthusiasm of the Parisians also raised his spirits wonderfully. For he was remarkably sensitive to any perceptible loss of popularity, little as he did to deserve the affection of his people. Foreign ministers hastened to Versailles to congratulate the king, and were agreeably surprised at the cordial reception he gave them. The listlessness with which they were usually received, and which was the reason that an audience was so rarely sought of the king, had wholly disappeared. Without throwing aside any of his wonted dignity of manner, his majesty almost condescended to gaiety, and old courtiers declared they had never before seen him so apparently happy.

A series of grand christening *fêtes* took place at Versailles. The queen attended them, and the king was so gracious as to assure her that it would give him pleasure to see her more frequently joining in the amusements of the court, and the diversions

of the *petits-appartements.* Paris was brilliantly illuminated for three successive nights, and a sum of 600,000 *livres* was ordered by the king, in a generous fit, to be expended on public festivities. At the suggestion, however, of Madame de Pompadour, it was disposed of in marriage portions to six hundred young girls, whose claims were to be presented in the course of that year. To celebrate the auspicious event, she, too, gave a dowry, of a thousand *francs* each, to fifteen of the villagers' daughters on her three estates of Crécy, Bellevue, and the Marquisate of Pompadour, the number, fifteen, being intended as a compliment to the king.

In this same eventful year was founded the École Militaire. Historians and memoir writers are far from agreeing to whom the first idea of this noble establishment should be assigned. The dauphin has been named, perhaps because, in his boyhood, he seemed inclined to a military life. Debarred, however, by his position from taking any active command, he yet was interested greatly, it is said, in the training of young men destined for the army. He may have been so, but he would probably have preferred to found Jesuit monasteries and colleges. Besides, no proposal of his, whatever its merits, would have found favour with the king. Some writers have said, "France owes the École Militaire to Comte d'Argenson;" others, "Marchault was the real pro-

jector of the École Militaire;" again, "This institution is mainly due to the brothers Paris;" and — least likely of all — the sole merit of it has been given to Louis XV. himself.

But of the few improvements and embellishments carried out in Paris during the reign of Louis XV., from 1748, as well as of many that were projected and begun, but afterwards, from want of funds or other causes, abandoned, the real originator was the Marquis de Marigny. The idea of the École Militaire is said to have occurred to him in the course of a conversation with M. Marchault and others on the public institutions founded in the reign of Louis XIV., and particularly the Hôtel des Invalides. The subject was discussed at Choisy, at one of the intimate *réunions* of the Marquise de Pompadour. There, reposing from the cares of government — for nothing was done without her sanction in any department — she occasionally sought mental recreation in a small circle of congenial friends — intellectual and artistic, as well as many of high rank, for her partizans were numerous in every class of society.

With reference to Les Invalides, it was remarked by one of the company that, although it was a noble institution, affording an honourable retreat to the worn-out and needy military man, the boon was still incomplete. It offered him an asylum, after spending the best years of his life in camps; but if there was a family, it rendered no

assistance in bringing up a son consistently with the rank and profession of the father. The marquise suggested an establishment for the wives and families of *les invalides militaires*, and Marchault, who was Contrôleur des Finances, set to work to calculate its probable expense. His figures were alarming, and, together with other obstacles he foresaw to its realization, at once put an end to the project.

De Marigny then proposed what he thought a more feasible scheme. This was a royal school or college for the gratuitous support and military education of a certain number of youths, the sons of needy gentlemen, and especially those whose fathers had fallen in battle in the service of the king. The company was much pleased with this scheme, the marquise was charmed with it, and, Pâris-Duvernay promising to furnish the requisite funds, she determined to bring it under the notice of the king. When submitted to Louis XV., he gave it a most favourable reception. Soufflot was summoned to examine the plans for the building sketched by his pupil, De Marigny. Generally he approved them, and, with some slight variations, they were adopted. The king fixed at five hundred the number of pupils to be accommodated, and Madame de Pompadour suggested that the site of the royal military college for youths, whom she designated "the hope of the nation," should be chosen as near as possible to the

hôtel of the gallant veterans who, equally, were its pride.

De Marigny was an excellent draughtsman. He was desirous of reviving the *prestige* of the French Academy of Architecture, which had fallen into disrepute. At his request the king re-established it, as it were, by granting new letters patent and creating, in connection with it, a school of architecture in Rome, thus raising it to a level with the Academy of Painting. The side of the Louvre looking towards the Seine, as far as it was continued during the reign of Louis XV., was completed under De Marigny's superintendence. He would have had the king finish the galleries connecting it with the Tuileries, in order to place there the Musée d'Antiques and Cabinet de Médailles. But useless, expensive, and inglorious wars emptied the treasury, and the works, resumed from time to time, were then entirely discontinued. Louis greatly esteemed De Marigny, and justly so. "*C'etait un homme de bon sens,*" he said "*qui valait dix hommes d'esprit.*"

In the galleries of the Louvre, from the time of Henri IV. until the great revolution, apartments and *ateliers* were assigned to the principal artists of the day, if they cared to make use of them. There De Marigny might constantly be met with when not employed in the galleries of Versailles. He, indeed, lived almost exclusively in the society of artists, *littérateurs,* and men of science. It

was he who undertook the formation of the Rubens gallery, collecting the works of the great painter from the various palaces in which they were dispersed, and, in some instances, disregarded and forgotten. The public exhibition of pictures and architectural designs, which first took place at regular intervals in the reign of Louis XV., and in the *salon* of the Louvre (whence its present designation), was established at his suggestion. He considered that both art and artists, as well as the public, would gain by it.

He had become acquainted with Joseph Vernet while in Rome, and with his talent for marine landscape painting, by his views of the scenery of Genoa. He now urged him to leave Rome for Paris. Vernet followed his advice, and received from his friend the king's command to paint those views of the seaports of France so well known through the engravings of Le Bas and Cochin. Fifteen of those paintings are in the Louvre. Vernet was then about thirty-eight, and, as a painter, was at his best. His recent picture, the "Castle of St. Angelo," had greatly raised his reputation. His Italian pictures generally are more agreeable to the eye than those painted in France. It may be that the formality of the groups of figures, and the little variation of scene, impart an air of monotony and coldness to the seaports, especially when several are seen together.

De Marigny, like Diderot, was an admirer of Greuze's "*Scènes de Famille.*" "Greuze," wrote Diderot, "*est mon peintre; il a inventé la peinture morale.*" While Boucher's fanciful productions, then so much sought after by the *beau monde*, he designated "*Paysages de l'Opéra*," and his shepherdesses and goddesses, "*jolies marionnettes*," with the borrowed grace and dignity of "*figurantes, avec la rouge pour les chairs, et de la poudre pour les cheveux.*" Diderot had little more esteem for Carle Vanloo than for Boucher, yet his portraits are said to be generally good as likenesses. He had the talent, or art, of catching the expression of the sitter.

The young painter who, at the period in question, gave promise of greatest celebrity was Jean Honoré Fragonard. At the age of twenty, his picture of "Jeroboam Sacrificing to the Idols" had carried off the academy's Grand Prix de Rome. It was considered a remarkable production of genius, the painter having received but little instruction. He was of a good Provençal family, but at his father's death some litigation took place which resulted in the loss of nearly the whole of his property. Fragonard, much against his inclination, was placed as clerk to a notary. He was then eighteen, and more frequently employed himself in making pen-and-ink sketches of cupids and nymphs and pastoral landscapes than in writing. This did not please the notary.

But he discerned so much talent in these sketchy productions that he recommended the young man's friends to place him with Boucher.

Boucher, then at the height of his fame, as a fashionable painter, took no pupils who were not already tolerably well acquainted with their art. With his pink and blue satin-draped *boudoir-atelier* constantly thronged with *grands seigneurs*, anxious to secure his cabinet pictures at any price he chose to set on them, or to engage his services, on the same terms, for the decoration of their *salons* with some of his inimitable panel paintings of *fêtes galantes*, or those graceful arabesques he so tastefully designed, he had no time for teaching. Boucher's pupils were his assistants, who learned what they pleased to adopt of his style by seeing him paint, and studying the effect of his mannerisms in the pictures retouched and finished by the master's own hand.

Fragonard's sketches were glanced at by Boucher. He nodded his approval of them, and sent the aspiring youth to Chardin, a brilliant colourist, excellent draughtsman, and an admirable painter of still life. Chardin, after looking over the pen-and-ink sketches that had so pleased the notary, put into Fragonard's hands a palette and brushes, and desired him to paint. It was Rembrandt's method, and succeeded so well with Fragonard that his rapid progress astonished his master. He had, however, supplemented his instructions

by visiting, at every spare moment, the churches of Paris, where there were then more fine pictures than are to be found in them now, and, after a diligent study of them, reproducing from memory those that had most particularly struck him.

At the end of six months he returned to Boucher, who was as much surprised at his progress as Chardin had been, and, as pupil without payment, now gladly received him. Another six months glided by. Fragonard had become weary of the grace and dignity of *les belles filles des coulisses de l'opéra*, whence Boucher selected his models for his Sainte Cecilias and Catherines, and even for *la sainte vierge*, with which he decorated the oratoire of the pious Marie Leczinska.* Fragonard was also ambitious of competing for the Grand Prix of the Academy, though he had not even been received there for the course of study

* The king, visiting the queen's apartments to inspect Boucher's paintings, fell, as the phrase is, deeply in love with the face of *la sainte vierge*. To the great edification of the poor simple-minded queen, Louis also fell on his knees before this vision of beauty, and came again to the oratoire more than once to gaze on it. "Was so much loveliness," he asked, "a mere creation of Boucher's fancy?" It was a question for the lieutenant of police to reply to. In a few days he was able to do so. The beautiful face of the *sainte vierge* was drawn from a living model. She was the painter's mistress, "and," said De Berryer, who owed his office to Madame de Pompadour, "worshipped by him." Louis seemed to reflect. When he spoke again, Berryer replied, "*Sire, n'y pensez pas.* In such a matter, Boucher is a man to be feared. The *émeute* of the other day" (which had been rather menacing to Berryer) "would be followed up by a revolt."

from the model. At that time, 1752, the prize was open to all competitors, and, to the astonishment of all, was won by a youth whose studies were comprised in six months' pen-and-ink sketching in a notary's books, six months' use of Chardin's colours and brushes, and six months' study of nature amongst Boucher's theatrical landscapes and *fêtes champêtres*.

Before the young artist set out for Rome, Boucher, who loved Paris far better, took him aside and said, "*Mon cher Frago*, you are about to see in Italy the works of Raphael, of Michael Angelo, and other masters of the Italian school; but I tell you in confidence, my friend, you are a lost man if you set seriously to work to form your style by studying the works *de ces gens-là*."

It was not only as a patron of the artists of his own day that the Marquis de Marigny was distinguished. He could admire the frequently admirable productions of Boucher's facile pencil, painted for Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour, without being insensible to the superior merit of "*ces gens-là*." Andrea del Sarto's *chef-d'œuvre*, and the "Saint Michael" (on panel) of Raphael — both, from neglect, fast going to destruction — were by Picot's invention, of which De Marigny bought the secret, transferred to new canvas. The levelling of the Champs Élysées, the formation of the Place Louis XV., and the replanting of the Boulevards,

were works proposed by him to the king, and for which he obtained his sanction.

Together with Soufflot, he made the plans for the new church of Ste. Geneviève, and those of the *barrières* of Paris. Assisted by the same architect, he elaborated a design for enlarging, rebuilding, embellishing, and draining Paris. When finished, he laid it before the king. The work, he calculated, would take twenty years to complete, and the cost of it he estimated at 30,000,000 *francs*, or 1,500,000 *francs* per annum. It amused Louis XV. to go into the particulars of this scheme, so clearly explained and rendered easily comprehensible by the eagerness of its advocate to recommend it to his notice.

"I fancy," said the king, "were your scheme carried out, that Paris, already the finest city in Europe, would be a finer one still — certainly more airy and spacious."

"Sire, it would be a far healthier city," replied De Marigny. "There would be less sickness, with proper drainage, pure water, public markets, and wider streets. The finest buildings in Paris are for the most part concealed by narrow, squalid streets and dilapidated houses. The Louvre, that might be one of the chief ornaments of the city, is hemmed in by mere hovels. More fountains are wanted, more trees should be planted, more theatres erected, and many monasteries suppressed."

"And where, M. de Marigny," said the king,

"do you imagine I should find the money you require to carry out your admirable plans?"

"Ah! Sire," he replied, "such a thought would never have occurred to your great ancestor, Louis XIV."

"I wish it had sometimes done so," said the king, "it would then have occurred less frequently to me."

It was unfortunate that such scruples should have pressed on the conscience of Louis XV. only when the improvement of his capital, or some similar beneficial object that would have bettered the condition of his people, was in question. He signed *acquits au comptant* readily enough for secret service purposes, whose aims and ends, as we know, were not always the most useful or praiseworthy.

CHAPTER XI.

Madame, La Duchesse. — The Promenade de Longchamps. — La Duchesse, en Robe de Cour. — Complimentary Fireworks. — The Jesuit, de Sacy. — Give Satan His Due. — An Angry Woman's Letter. — "Je le Veux." — A Perfect Picture of Flora. — The Queen's Toilettes. — "I Pray You, Sing Me a Song." — Grand Air de Triomphe. — Une Très Grande Dame. — Alexandrine d'Étioles. — Death of Alexandrine. — Le Comte de Kaunitz-Rietberg. — Désagréments of the Chase. — A Martyr to Duty. — Kaunitz at Versailles. — An Ally of Voltaire.

"HIS MAJESTY has presented me with six beautiful Arabian horses," wrote Madame de Pompadour to the Comtesse de Noailles.

These six Arab steeds were to have the honour of drawing a handsome new coach, of which Martin, coachbuilder to the court, was then superintending the completion. Many persons sought permission to examine this latest specimen of Martin's known skill; and of those who obtained it, the greater part went their way filled with envy or indignation.

"I have expressly ordered," Madame de Pompadour tells the countess, "that my coach may not be disfigured by any of those *scènes galantes*

with which it is now the fashion to decorate the panels. It is a fashion I dislike. It is offensive to good taste."

The king had recently, on the *fête de Saint Jean* — the *fête* day of the marquise — raised her to the rank of duchess. Hence the need of this new equipage and a change in her arms, which, from her own designs, were elaborately emblazoned on the panels of her carriage, instead of the fashionable *scènes à la Boucher.* Some of the carriages of that day were really very beautifully painted with mythological or pastoral subjects. It was a caprice that for a time almost superseded the labours of the herald painter, notwithstanding the prevailing fondness for the prominent display of highly wrought armorial bearings.

The coachmaker's art had progressed considerably during the last few years. The carriages were less capacious and cumbrous; also easier, lighter, and better slung.

This had been especially noticed at the last Holy Week promenade of Longchamps, whither the *beau monde* continued to flock. An order of the Archbishop of Paris, in consequence of an accident to Madame de Flavacourt's carriage, through the pressure of the crowd, had closed the Abbaye doors during the celebration of the grand musical "*Office des Ténèbres.*" The religious object of this annual promenade, originating with the Orléans family, was, therefore, at an end.

The promenade, however, survived as a yearly rival display of luxury and extravagance, both in *toilette* and equipage. The name of the fortunate person who generally was considered to have surpassed all others, and to have won the *grand prix* in this praiseworthy contest, was at that period usually proclaimed.

The new carriage, with the six fiery Arabs gaily caparisoned, would doubtless have borne off the bell. But this was not the sort of triumph our new duchess looked forward to, or indeed would have cared for. She was too prudent, by far, to seek publicly so trivial a distinction. The real arbiter of taste and the glass of fashion we know she then was. We are reminded of it as we of these degenerate days stroll up Regent Street and sorrowfully gaze on the dreary exhibition of painted and glazed cottons, ticketed with her name, *triste* imitations of the richly brocaded Pompadour silks. The charming bouquets, and garlands of flowers *en sautoir*, were either designed by herself, or were the productions of Boucher's fanciful pencil. He was inimitable in creations of that kind; and as inimitably were they reproduced by the looms of Lyon.

Boucher painted the duchess in her *robe de cour*, that splendid *toilette* and tasteful combination of satin, embroidery, laces, and flowers, in which she was presented anew to the queen. It was on her elevation to the much envied distinc-

tion of the *tabouret*, or right of being seated in the presence of, and near to, royalty, and being kissed on the forehead by the princes and princesses of the blood. The dauphin is said to have performed his part of that ceremony with very ill grace, by no means *à la Richelieu*, or with that air of gallantry towards *le beau sexe* so characteristic of his royal father, and which had won him the distinctive appellation of "*parfait gentilhomme français*," in addition to that of "*Le bien aimé*."

The dauphin had recently recovered from an attack of small-pox of a less malignant type than was too frequently the case in those days. Yet it had been severe enough to raise fears for his life, and to leave its disfiguring traces on his countenance. During his illness Madame de Pompadour had evinced much sympathy toward the young dauphine and the queen. The danger being past, and the convalescence of the dauphin publicly announced, she celebrated the event by a *fête* with fireworks. The latter consisted of an allegorical device, in which a dolphin was represented gaily disporting himself in his native element, while around were sea-monsters spitting forth fire at him. The monsters were intended to represent the small-pox and other attacks of illness to which the dauphin for some years had been subject. Gradually they disappeared from the piece, leaving the dolphin alone in his glory, diverting him-

Madame de Pompadour

self with his sports and gambols, which typified restored, even improved health, in spite of the illness that had threatened to undermine it.

Perhaps an explanation was necessary rightly to understand this, for the dauphin interpreted it differently. He saw in this allegory only an insult. The head of the dolphin he fancied a caricature likeness of his own. In the fire-spitting monsters, which the people, not seeking for a meaning, admired immensely as a spectacle, he discerned an intimation to them that he was abhorred of all who were about him. That the *débauché* Louis XV. disliked his bigoted Jesuit son was no secret, probably, to the dauphin himself. Yet Madame de Pompadour's solicitude respecting him, whether real or affected, during his illness, does not appear to have displeased the king. It was as if in recompense for it, he, in that same year, created her a duchess. Her elevation at the same time to the honour of the *tabouret* — though the pretensions of the Duchesse de Luynes were set aside by the king in her favour — gave rise, however, to some difficulties.

It was necessary she should confess, partake of the sacrament, and receive absolution. The queen consulted with the marquise on the subject. The learned Père De Sacy also visited her, and after a long interview, during which "he conversed with *une grâce charmante*," seemed inclined to the opinion that the *pros* outweighed the *cons*,

and that it would be possible to absolve her. But, Jesuit-like, he would not commit himself to any positive decision. He would reflect, he would consult, he would take ten days or a fortnight to make up his mind, he said, insinuatingly, at the same time allowing it to be understood that any obstacles he had raised, or scruples he had suggested as likely to be raised by his order, would disappear during that interval. As it is right that every good Christian should give even Satan his due, no less Christian-like is it to give the benefit of a doubt even to a Jesuit. Possibly, then, just possibly, the good Father De Sacy may have meant what he said, for the hope was held out to him of becoming the king's confessor. But the strong Jesuitical cabal of the court of the dauphin and the queen could not well have been defied, influential as he was with his order as Procureur Général des Missions. At the expiration of the fortnight, Sacy wrote a long letter, of which the following is a *résumé:*

"Madame la Marquise,— It is impossible to grant you the absolution you ask for. You desire, so you have told me, to fulfil the duties incumbent on every good Christian. The highest of them is to set a good example. To merit and obtain absolution, your first step must be to become reunited to M. d'Étioles, or at least to quit the court, thus edifying your neighbour, who declares himself scandalized by the favour shown you

by the king, and your separation from your husband."

On the back of the letter (returned immediately), she is said to have written as follows:

"Mon Père,—You are a true Jesuit. You understand me, no doubt, when I tell you so. How you enjoyed the embarrassment and need you imagined you found me in! I know, of course, that it would gratify you much to have me leave the court, and that you think me weak and tottering. But, know this. I am as powerful here as you are, and, in spite of all the Jesuits in the world, here I will remain.

"La Marquise de Pompadour,
"*Dame du Palais de la Reine.*"

It is an angry woman's letter, written on the spur of the moment. Reflection would probably have produced a more dignified reply, and one that should have been more cutting and annoying to the Jesuit. But the expulsion of the Jesuits from France was from that time determined upon, and Madame de Pompadour and their persistent enemy, M. de Choiseul, rested not until they had accomplished their object. All difficulties respecting the *tabouret* were immediately overcome. Madame de Pompadour was judicially separated from her husband. M. d'Étioles, weary of exile, had some time before solicited and obtained permission to return to France. He had even been

so wanting in self-respect as to accept a lucrative post offered him by the king, though his circumstances were affluent, and his daughter was provided for by her mother.

The "*je le veux*" of Louis had, doubtless, smoothed the upward path of Madame de Pompadour's ambition. No obstacles would have confronted her had she been a *grande dame*, like, for instance, the insolent De Montespan, whose haughty airs so intimidated the poor little Spanish wife of the magnificent Louis XIV. Marie Thérèse, indeed, began to doubt whether she were really the queen, and shrank from the overpowering presence of that "splendid creature," her rival, to the seclusion of her oratory, to weep and to pray. The *Grand Monarque* and his Montespan, meanwhile, went through their devotions in public — side by side; thus edifying all beholders, and setting them a fine example, which, on the authority of a Jesuit, is the very head and front of Christian duty.

Once, indeed, a poor creature of a *curé* did venture to refuse absolution to Jupiter's *grande maîtresse*. "Had the earth opened beneath him," as some people say, the great king could not have been more astounded. He was absolutely thunderstruck at the presumption of this insect of a priest. And it is probable that the poor man would have been "*embastillé*" for the term of his natural life, had not his lucky stars happened to

be in the ascendant, while the favour of the haughty marquise was on the wane. It was at the time when the pious and unselfish Madame de Maintenon was working heart and soul to achieve that great work, the salvation of the *Grand Monarque*.

In the present instance there is no question of punishing or treating with contempt a poor parish priest with a scrupulous conscience. It is a great man among the Society of Jesus (what a misnomer!) who has presumed to offend a king's favourite, and the society, *en masse*, shall feel her resentment. She, however, seeks, as she always does, to propitiate Marie Leczinska and the princesses; and on the morning after her triumph appears before the queen carrying a basket of choice flowers, just received from her conservatories at Belle-vue. It is a present to the queen for the decoration of her apartments. Very charming the duchess looks in her white muslin *négligée* — a perfect picture of Flora, that Boucher or Fragonard would have loved to paint. The deep lace on her sleeves is looped back to the elbow with velvet rosettes, displaying the beauty of her arms, as they encircle the basket of flowers.

At no time was Marie Leczinska remarkable for tasteful *toilettes*. When the becoming Polish fashions had had their day, she adopted whatever the taste and fancy of the reigning *belles* of the court brought into favour. Of late years she had very

injudiciously either discarded, or been wholly indifferent to, that ornamental setting which every woman needs, though she be a gem of purest ray. The queen had allowed herself to sink into the frumpy old woman, and, with her snuff-box beside her — for she often applied to it — and wrapped up in her sad-coloured polonaise, and with a *coiffe* on her head, looked ten years older than she was. Now and then, when she went to the entertainments of the *petits-appartements* — as her confessor occasionally allowed — to hear Madame de Pompadour sing, she put herself into the hands of her tiring-women, who usually dressed her very much as they pleased, which was not always the most becomingly.

It is so long since she voluntarily abdicated her rightful position at court that she is not very accessible to jealous pangs. Yet something of that sort crosses her mind when Madame de Pompadour enters. As she is about to set down her basket, the queen steps forward and prevents her. "She looks so charming with her basket of flowers," she tells her, "that she must not be relieved of it until she has sung" (of course, in the character of a coquettish village maid) "some appropriate song — one of those pretty *chansons* she has heard her sing in the 'Devin du Village,' or other musical piece." Two or three persons of the queen's intimate circle are with her in her *ruelle*. They smile, as if anticipating some amusement.

Madame de Pompadour prays to be excused. She discerns an intention to disparage her; to show her off as a silly, vain woman, eager for admiration, and at whose expense the queen may afford her friends a little diversion. Marie Leczinska persists in her request. Again she is entreated not to urge it — for etiquette forbids a positive refusal to comply with the royal command. But the queen is bent on making her rival act and sing — on making her ridiculous, in fact. And Madame de Pompadour, compelled to sing against her will, is bent on having her revenge.

She perceives there is a *clavecin* in the room.* Placing her basket of flowers on the table, before the queen can prevent her, Madame de Pompadour sits down to the instrument, and, instead of the *chansonnette* she has been asked for, favours the queen and her friends with her *grand air de triomphe*, "*Enfin il est dans mon pouvoir*," from Lulli's "Armida," allowing them to make whatever application of the words they pleased; and it appears they made the right one. Her musical education had been perfect, and her singing of this grand air was a *tour de force*, of which very few who were not professional singers were capable. The queen had heard her sing it before —

* Young Beaumarchais — then only twenty, gigantic in stature, and remarkably handsome — had just been appointed by the king to teach music to the three princesses — of course in the queen's apartments.

never, perhaps, with the same apparent exultant joy as on the occasion referred to. Poor Marie Leczinska!

All the prerogatives of a princess of a sovereign house were at this time conferred by the king on Madame de Pompadour, and all the pomp and parade then deemed indispensable to rank so exalted were fully assumed by her. Except on those occasions when it was her own good pleasure to seek relief in the society of a few chosen friends from the wearisome etiquette with which she was surrounded, she was approached with as much ceremony as the king, even by the members of his family, sharing with him the homage — and probably receiving the larger share — paid by courtiers and foreign ministers to royalty.

The first woman of her bedchamber was "*une demoiselle de qualité.*" Her chamberlain and *premier écuyer* were men of rank. A chevalier of the Order of Le St. Esprit bore her train. Collin, one of the procureurs or attorneys of the Châtelet, was her *intendant*, and was decorated expressly for that office when placed over her household at the Hôtel d'Évreux (Élysée Bourbon). The Marquis de Marigny was appointed secretary of the Order of Le St. Esprit, which conferred on him *un cordon bleu exceptionnel*, without *preuves de noblesse*.

A handsome pension was given to her father, but he was required to reside at not less than forty

leagues' distance from Paris, as his presence at court would have been rather embarrassing. He took up his abode in a pleasant part of Champagne, where he seems to have enjoyed life exceedingly, after the ups and downs of his earlier days, and his narrow escape from being hanged. Her mother had died in 1749, at about the same time as the "sublime Émilie," when condolences were exchanged between Madame de Pompadour and Voltaire — Voltaire, of course, pouring forth his sorrow and sympathy in rhymes. Her daughter yet remained to her. Alexandrine d'Étioles was then between nine and ten years of age, a remarkably intelligent child, carefully educated and giving promise of great musical talent.

Marmontel said of the young daughter of his patroness, "*Qu'elle était la petite fille la plus spirituelle de France.*" He was accustomed to read his famous tales, "Contes de Marmontel," to the mother and daughter. While doing so, he assumed, it appears, a certain air of effeminate affectation, perhaps thinking to impart further interest to them. The young lady observed this, and remarked, sententiously, that "*M. Marmontel, dans sa manière de lire, avait l'air trop marquise.*" This was repeated to Marmontel, and longer than usual he absented himself from the *toilette* of the duchess. When she inquired the reason — for she was much interested in her *protégé*, who, but for her encouragement, would have given up

literature — he replied, "*Que vraiment il craignait les épigrammes de Mdlle. Alexandrine, autant que celles de Piron.*" This was, of course, said jestingly, but it shows that there was piquancy enough in the child's remark to annoy him.

Madame de Pompadour had already cast her eyes on the young Duc de Fronsac, De Richelieu's only son, as a suitable *parti* for her daughter. The king approved, and mentioned it to De Richelieu, who replied, "Sire, it would be necessary first to obtain the consent of the family of Lorraine." However, the poor child died in her twelfth year, in the convent of the Assumption, in the Rue St. Honoré. Her death was probably the greatest blow Madame de Pompadour ever experienced in her affections. For one may believe that she loved power, and loved it to excess, yet decline to give entire credence to such a writer as Soulavie, who, in his untrustworthy "Memoirs," represents her as bereft of all feeling, and a callous, hard-hearted monster. Her ambitious views had included, no doubt, an advantageous marriage for her daughter. Most mothers have similiar aspirations.

A project is said to have been on the *tapis*, at the time of the child's death, for a marriage with a scion of the house of Nassau. And it is not unlikely. Already the *rusée*, Jesuitical empress, Marie Thérèse, who, through her effeminate ambassador, Count Venceslaus de Kaunitz, was kept

well informed of all that took place at the court of Versailles, had saluted Madame de Pompadour as "*ma bonne cousine.*" Kaunitz prepared the way for Stahremberg. He had signed for Austria the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and afterwards remained as ambassador to play the agreeable when at Versailles, both to the king and Madame de Pompadour. In Paris he resided at the Palais-Bourbon, and frequented assiduously the receptions of the Marquis de Marigny, and of the Duc de Choiseul, then appointed Ministre des Affaires Étrangères.

M. de Kaunitz, notwithstanding his reputation as an able diplomatist, was as much occupied with the cares of the *toilette*, with the preservation of the smoothness of his complexion, and the delicate whiteness of his hands, as any effeminate *petit-maître* of the *salons*, or even as the rose-leaf tinted *grandes dames* of the court. The count was, as the French say, "*jeune encore;*" or, more poetically, "*les derniers reflets de la jeunesse*" still lingered about him. He had reached the *quarantaine* — a period of life less terrible to men than to women. His manners were courtly, and he had, therefore, found favour with the king, who was extremely sensitive on that point. *Brusquerie* of character was far more offensive to him than were vicious principles — he shrank from those in whose demeanour he seemed to detect it.

So devoted to the chase himself, Louis XV. imagined that no one could be otherwise than

delighted by an invitation to join the royal hunt. But alas for poor Kaunitz! while striving to appear enraptured with the sport, he was suffering agonies. Too much wind, too much sun — either would be fatal to his complexion, and often there was too much of both. Fastidious ladies might have screened themselves with mask or veil from the attacks of bright Phœbus or rude Boreas. But in presence of a bevy of *belles dames* — amongst whom were the dauphine (a famous huntress), Madame Adélaïde (the king's eldest daughter), and Madame de Pompadour; all *en habit de chasse*, and, regardless of their complexions, wearing little feather-trimmed *chapeaux à tricornes* — the count was compelled to appear as reckless of exposure as they were, lest, in screening himself from the weather, he should expose himself to ridicule. It would have been like falling into Charybdis in attempting to avoid Scylla.

He had invented a sort of paste, which, put, soft, on the hands at night, adhered as it hardened, and remained firm till the morning. When removed, the fairest lady in the land might have envied the lily whiteness of the count's *belles mains*. He had as many rules for the preservation of his health as his beauty; and greatly it grieved his righteous spirit to depart from them. So that, what with his decorative art and his hygienic system, he may be said to have been a martyr to duty — his duty, as a diplomatist, to his sovereign and

his country. Duty alone would have drawn him from his cosy apartment in the Palais Bourbon, and his luxurious private *boudoir;* where, at his ease, in an elegant *robe de chambre* that the Duc de Gêvres might have envied, he penned long despatches, minutely descriptive of all that was passing around him, whether political or social.

Kaunitz was a keen observer. Grimm charged him with extreme frivolity; and the effeminacy he affected justified the charge. But Marie Thérèse put much confidence in him for the carrying out of her views. He had been intended for the Church, but preferred diplomacy to fasting and praying. His advancement had been rapid; for at the age of forty he was at the head of one of the most important of European embassies. The ambassadors' quarters at Versailles did not quite suit his habits; but he was not averse to the dinners and amusements of the *petits-appartements.* Attending the *toilette* of Madame de Pompadour was a far more interesting *passetemps* to him than that of witnessing the mysteries of the *petit levcr* of Louis XV. He, however, contrived to perform both those duties with, as was said, "infinite grace."

He kept the devout Marie Thérèse *au courant* of all that was said, done, and suspected, at that favourite abode of royalty; for she liked a dish of court scandal no less than did Louis XV. himself. The count was fond of Parisian life, and was sup-

posed to be deeply tinged with the prevailing philosophism. He was a frequenter of the *salons*, and especially of that favourite resort of the ambassadors, where the whole of Europe was often represented — the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin.

When Madame de Pompadour sojourned for awhile at her Hôtel d'Évreux, the Comte de Kaunitz was invariably present at her private receptions. While playing the part of a frivolous man of pleasure, he learned to estimate fully the energetic character, great attainments, and natural abilities of the mistress of the weak and incompetent Louis XV. In sharing the Duc de Choiseul's opinion, that Madame de Pompadour possessed many of the essential qualities of an able minister of state, as well as great aptitude for diplomatic negotiation, the count impressed the same view of her character and abilities on the mind of his sovereign. Taking advantage of this, in a way that the empress well knew would prove most flattering to the *amour-propre* of such a woman, she began the famous correspondence which won over to her cause the great influence of *la maîtresse-en-titre*, made France the ally of Austria, and paved the way to the Seven Years' War.

But diplomacy and the cares of the *toilette* did not wholly engross the time and thoughts of the ambassador. He was a frequenter of the theatres, was intimate with Voltaire, and a great admirer of

his genius. To Madame de Pompadour he significantly expressed his regret that prejudice on one side and fanaticism on the other should at that critical moment deprive the court of France of the aid of Voltaire's powerful pen.

CHAPTER XII.

Crébillon and Voltaire. — Voltaire and the Court. — Crébillon at the Toilette. — Rising and Setting Stars. — Adieu, La Belle France. — Clerical and Other Cabals. — Lekain's Début. — Voltaire's Pupil at Sceaux. — "Ah! Dieu, qu'il est Laid!" — A Stage-struck Painter. — An Unfortunate Débutant. — Belcourt Invited to Paris. — Advice to a Young Actor. — Lekain in Despair. — Lekain at Versailles. — A Discourteous Greeting. — A Triumph for Lekain. — A Reform in Costume. — Clairon's Grande Révérence. — Clairon and Marmontel. — A Vexatious Contretemps.

THE fast waning popularity of Crébillon experienced a temporary revival through the success of his tragedy of "Catalina." It was, however, a success more forced than real; got up by his friends, with Piron and other enemies of Voltaire at their head, and rather for the sake of annoying the latter than serving the former. For Voltaire, though so immensely superior in talent, and his fame European, was not proof against the shafts of envious mediocrity. He was easily roused to jealousy of even so poor a rival as the aged Crébillon.

Crébillon, it is true, had, on this occasion, succeeded where Voltaire, with all his advantages, and his audacity to boot, had failed. Notwithstanding

that he was no frequenter of the *salons*, but a lounger of the *cabarets*, a dweller among the poor, in a humble house in the Marais — with his pipe and his dogs for companions — Crébillon had been well received by the king. Louis had even condescended to ask him to read a scene of his "Catalina," and declared himself edified by it. "Crébillon," he said, "has far more genius than Voltaire. He is a second Racine." The courtiers echoed these words, and the echo reached the ears of Voltaire. Momentarily, Crébillon became the fashion, and, better still for the needy poet, the king gave him a pension. Permission to print his works at the Louvre — "Avec approbation et privilége du Roi," was also conceded to him.

In conversation with Madame de Pompadour, Voltaire appealed, as it were, against this concession. He thought it an injustice, while a similar privilege was denied to his own works. And she agreed with the poet. For, though fully aware of his vanity, she appreciated his talent, and was amused by his *esprit railleur*. She had been present at the private representation of "Rome Sauvée" — "Catalina" under another name, and a rival production. It was performed at Voltaire's private theatre in the Rue Traversière — the Duc de Villars playing Catalina, and Voltaire Cicero. She had also heard Crébillon declaim before the king. The old poet was then in his seventy-sixth year. His hair was white as snow, but abundant;

his features large, and the expression of his countenance sombre — at times, while reciting, almost menacing. He had a deep sepulchral voice, and much *brusquerie* in his gestures; while his rugged verse became harsher to the ear by his harshness of accentuation.

Louis XV. personally disliked Voltaire, and this feeling was nourished by the clamour of the court. He was bored, too, by the agitated entreaties of poor Marie Leczinska, to whom the very name of Voltaire was a bugbear. Urged on by the dauphin and his Jesuit surroundings, she came as a martyr to implore, on her knees, that the king would uphold the religion of the state — menaced, as she was told, by Voltaire's return to the court. Madame de Pompadour could not, then, under such circumstances, plead very warmly for her friend Voltaire, or suggest very earnestly that the honours of the Louvre should be conceded to his works. Her object was to keep her august sovereign amused, and in good humour; not to thwart him in matters comparatively indifferent. When Crébillon, therefore, made his appearance at her *toilette*, to offer his thanks for the favours he had received from the king, she received him very graciously, and with many kind words. The old poet prayed to be allowed the honour of kissing her hand. The honour was granted, and Voltaire's jealousy and disgust knew no bounds.

It was wonderful that the strong opposition

of the priestly element to his reception by the Academy had been overcome. But, *en revanche*, it was resolutely determined to exclude him from the court altogether. He had no longer a Château de Cirey to flee to for rest and consolation; nor did a cordial welcome await him at the Hôtel in the Île St. Louis — for the sublime Émilie was dead. But he, at least, was now free to wander whither he would; so he turned his thoughts towards Prussia. Frederick's invitation to Potzdam had for some time past been pressing. The circle of philosophers assembled there was incomplete without the brilliant writer, the patriarch of the sect. "Let him come to Potzdam; let him make that home of *libres penseurs* his abode," and enliven by his presence the *soupers* of Sans-Souci — that Frederick, by the grace of God, King of Prussia and Elector of Brandenburg, may add to these titles the far prouder one — "*Possesseur de Voltaire*."

Yet Voltaire showed no great eagerness to accept this flattering invitation, and, had he been more graciously treated at Versailles, might, perhaps, have declined it. But while wounded *amour-propre* was still smarting from the preference expressed by Louis XV. for the plays of Crébillon, it received a further stab from some flattering expressions of the great Frederick, addressed to the young poet, Baculard d'Arnaud, who was then at Berlin. "Arnaud," wrote the

king, in doggerel verse, "*Arnaud est à son aurore, et Voltaire à son couchant.*" Of course, this was soon on its road from Berlin to Paris, and tarried not by the way. It was duly laid before Voltaire, who, having glanced at it, went off into a terrible rage. "*J'irai!*" he exclaimed, "*j'irai apprendre à ce roi que Voltaire ne se couche pas encore.*" He had already bargained with Frederick for the advance of the sum of 16,000 *francs*, to defray his own expenses on the journey, and those of Madame Denis, his niece.

Louis XV. was then at Compiègne, where a camp was forming, and where the general officers were amusing their sovereign and themselves with military manœuvres, *fêtes*, and grand banquets. For Compiègne Voltaire set out, without loss of time. He had no thought of casting off his allegiance to his rightful monarch; therefore, though nominally only a gentleman of the bedchamber, he solicited and received permission to visit the court of Berlin, and to accept any dignity the King of Prussia might confer on him. At Compiègne he found also M. von Raesfeld — an officer in the service of Frederick — who, acting on orders received from Potzdam, had made arrangements for facilitating the journey of the poet and his niece to the Prussian capital. Thus did Voltaire bid an adieu, a long adieu, to La belle France. But though personally absent, the spirit of the mocking philosopher still hovered over her,

and his influence was, perhaps, the more deeply felt.

Louis XV. returned to Versailles. The busy life of the camp had amused him, and relieved him from the worry of domestic dissensions, refractory parliaments, squabbles and differences in the Church, which, no foreign war being now on hand, were, as usual, brought forward to disturb the peace of the kingdom. They were principally fomented by the Archbishop of Paris — Christophe de Beaumont, a man of unconciliating spirit, and an ardent supporter of the Bulle Unigenitus — once more thrust into prominence, but now unanimously rejected by the Parliament. The king interfered — the Pope, Benedict XIV., was appealed to. The undignified contention continued yet for some years; in the course of which Louis was prevailed on by Madame de Pompadour to take the bold step of exiling the archbishop with two or three of the most troublesome bishops — supporters of his arbitrary views.

Cabals prevailed also both in the theatrical and musical world. Disputes ran high between the partizans of Rameau and *la musique française*, and those of Pergolese and *la musique italienne*. Also between those who discerned an actor of merit in the *débutant* Lekain, and the supporters of Belcourt, who had been brought from a provincial company to oppose him. Belcourt had a handsome person and agreeable manners, and

these were, at that time — for he had but little experience — his chief recommendations. They were sufficient, however, to place Lekain at an immense disadvantage — his personal appearance being not only unprepossessing, but repulsive.

A contemporary writer, who thought favourably of Lekain's abilities, describes him as of low stature, his legs thick, short, and rather bowed; his complexion red and spotted, mouth large, with thick lips — the *tout-ensemble* of his countenance disagreeable, and his figure ungainly. His voice was hard, grating to the ear, and without modulation, and his action was uncouth. His eyes were his only redeeming feature. They were large, full of fire, and most expressive. He, indeed, seems to have been a striking instance of the great power of the eye's eloquence. His *début* at the Théâtre Français took place on the 14th September, 1750, as Titus in Voltaire's tragedy of "Brutus." Lekain was then in his twenty-first year, and fully conscious of his want of every personal advantage.

The ordeal of his first appearance may have been to his imagination partly divested of its terrors by the success he had achieved but ten days before at the Duchesse du Maine's theatre at Sceaux. He had played there Lentulus in Voltaire's rival play of "Rome Sauvée." The duchess, who, in her earlier days, had been considered a good actress, and whose château con-

tinued to resemble a theatre more than a royal lady's private residence, was most favourably impressed by the young man's acting. He was a stranger to her, introduced at her theatre by Voltaire, to take a part on that occasion in his tragedy.

"Who is that young actor?" she enquired of the poet.

"Madame," he replied, "he is the first of all actors — Lekain."

She had heard before of Voltaire's talented *protégé* and pupil. Having seen him act, she agreed with the poet that "*C'est Lekain qui va jouer*" would one day be an announcement that should fill any theatre, whether in or out of France, and, she added, "in spite of his ugliness." But Voltaire could not, or would not, see that. "*L'âme tragique*," and the latent talent which experience was to develop, were alone visible to him. Lekain had gained a warm partizan in the energetic and still romantic old duchess. But her partizanship availed him little. He had to conquer his position by courage and patience. His *début* was the occasion of a tumultuous scene. The theatre, the balcony, and the boxes rejected him. "*Les talons rouges, et les femmes de bel air*," would not look at him, or rather, having looked, turned away their heads, exclaiming, "*Ah! Dieu, qu'il est laid!*" and would look no more.

But the critics of the *parterre* were more mer-

ciful and far more just. Scrambling with all their might to get nearer the stage (the *parterre* at that period was without seats) and vociferating that they "wanted to hear" — when the laughter and hisses and exclamations of *les loges* made the actor inaudible — they cheered him on by their plaudits. One far-seeing individual, bolder than the rest, exclaimed "*Ce sera le plus grand acteur des comédiens du roi!*" a prediction received with peals of laughter by the party of the upper regions, and with noisy demonstrations of approval by the pit. It needed, indeed, a degree of confidence and perseverance possessed by few, to face the determined opposition the young actor met with for near a year and a half before he was received as *sociétaire*.

Belcourt, at this time, was performing at Bordeaux. He had no idea of so soon venturing an appearance in Paris, when he was called upon by the cabal of the *beau monde* to make his *début* at the Théâtre Français as a rival to Lekain. Both these actors — they were about the same age — had taken to the stage contrary to the wishes of their families and the earnest advice of friends. Both were well educated. Lekain was the son of a jeweller, in good circumstances, and Belcourt's father was the portrait painter, Gilles Colson. On leaving the college of Toulouse, he was placed as pupil with Carle Vanloo, and it was the frequent performance of a part in the

petites comédies, with which the fashionable painter sometimes amused his friends, that young Colson discovered, as he believed, that his vocation was acting, not painting.

Nothing could turn him from this fancy. He neglected the lessons of his master, and got many a scolding for doing ill, or not doing at all, the work assigned him in the *atelier*. But Colson was studying a part, Néristan, in which he expected, at one bound, to reach the Temple of Fame. Being reproved by his father, he decamped. By some means he reached Besançon, where he met with Préville, afterwards so famous. Under the name of Belcourt, which he retained as a *nom de théâtre*, Colson made his *début*. His theatrical wardrobe consisted of a black coat, for grand court mourning; a pair of velvet breeches, that had had the honour of being worn by Mdlle. Clairon in a part in which she had assumed male attire; a bag-wig, trimmed with black lace, and a pair of shoes with red heels and paste buckles.

Néristan was to take Besançon by storm. But, alas for his high aspirations! when the *débutant* appeared before the audience, his confidence entirely forsook him. He became paralyzed with fear. He was a well-grown, handsome youth of eighteen. His appearance pleased, and he was encouraged by applause. At last he began his part, speaking scarcely above a whisper; but recovered his voice a little as he went on. In the

scene where Néristan throws himself at the feet of his lady-love, Belcourt had regained in some degree his *sang froid*. Gracefully and energetically he fell on his knees, but, as ill-luck would have it, an accident occurred, at that precise moment, to the velvet garment that had belonged to Mdlle. Clairon, who was less robust than its present wearer. The consequence was an effect on the audience wholly different from that he had intended. The house rang with shouts of laughter, and the sadly humbled *débutant*, overwhelmed with shame and confusion, beat a hasty retreat.

Three years had elapsed. Belcourt was at Bordeaux, where he played "*les jeunes premiers*," much to the satisfaction of the Bordelais, and was highly esteemed for the excellence of his private character. The Duc de Richelieu had seen him perform at Bordeaux. To please the ladies who exclaimed against the ugliness of Lekain, he succeeded in getting together a powerful party to induce the handsome Belcourt to visit Paris, and, as a rival to Lekain, to make his *début* at the Français. The rage not only for the theatre, but for acting, was then so general that, following the example of Versailles, almost every hôtel of any pretensions gave private theatricals. It was at the theatre of M. de Clermont-Tonnerre that Lekain's talent was first noticed, and in a play called "Le Mauvais Riche," written by that same Baculard d'Arnaud, who, complimented by Frederick, was

the immediate cause of Voltaire's hasty journey to Prussia.

Lekain had played the principal part, and, as represented by him, the author was astonished at his own creation. He mentioned the youthful actor to Voltaire, speaking of him as a prodigy. Voltaire's curiosity was roused, and, after seeing him in Arnaud's play, he sent for Lekain. As was his custom, he received him with extended arms, and, embracing him with enthusiasm, exclaimed, "Thank Heaven for creating a being capable of exciting in me the deep and tender emotions I experienced while listening to such miserable trash as Arnaud's verses!" He advised the young man to cultivate his talent for his own pleasure and recreation, but to avoid the stage as a profession. "It is a noble one," he said; "but here, in France, hypocrites have branded it with disgrace." But Lekain heeded not this advice; like Belcourt, he was convinced that his vocation was acting. Voltaire probably had the same conviction; for forthwith he took Lekain under his protection, and instructed him at his private theatre in the principal *rôles* of his own tragedies.

Voltaire was not present at the *débuts*. The strong feeling of the court against him may have increased the opposition to his *protégé*. Belcourt appeared first as Achille, in "Iphigénie en Aulide," and as Léandre, in "Le Babillard." Notwithstanding the admiration of the ladies for "*un si bel*

homme," the critics of the *parterre* pronounced him inferior to Lekain in tragedy. The adverse cabal alone supported Belcourt, while the people crowded in to see Lekain. His superiority was frankly acknowledged by his rival, who desired to return the next day to Bordeaux. Those who had brought him thence would not hear of it, and the *débuts* went on. Lekain played Œdipus with great applause, and was received, "*à l'essai*," at a yearly salary of 1,200 *francs*. Belcourt, who it was thought might, perhaps, succeed Grandval, was received for "*la haute comédie ;*" but poor Lekain, with only his *âme tragique* and his *beaux yeux*, continued to meet with so much opposition, that, despairing to overcome it, he thought of leaving France and accepting an engagement offered him in Prussia.

The Princess Robecq, conjointly with Voltaire, dissuaded him from leaving. He had studied diligently during the sixteen months he was kept, *à l'essai*, on his forty pounds a year. With experience, the faults that the critics at first had noticed, disappeared, and his great talent became very strikingly developed. His pronunciation was perfect, which was not always the case with many of the best actors and actresses of that day. But the more his merits became evident, the more did envy and jealousy strive to disparage him. Yet even among the actors there was one (Belcourt) who, weary of the intrigues and cabals carried on

both in and out of the theatre, called out energetically, "If you are not willing to receive him as your equal, you may certainly receive him as your master."

Opposition, at last, came unexpectedly to an end. The actors were commanded to play at Versailles before the king and the court, and Lekain asked permission of Grandval to take the part of Orosmane.

"*Mon ami*, you would ruin your prospects entirely," said Grandval.

"I am willing to risk that," replied Lekain.

"Well, in that case I consent; but bear in mind I warned you," said Grandval — perhaps thinking he was acting as a friend.

The day so anxiously looked forward to by Lekain is arrived. King, queen, princesses, Madame de Pompadour, courtiers, and *grandes dames* are assembled in the royal theatre of Versailles. Many of this goodly company have not seen the new actor, against whom so pitiless a storm has been raging. This has raised curiosity, and Orosmane's entrance is eagerly awaited. He appears. There is a general movement of surprise. "*Ah! qu'il est laid!*" meets his ear (one would have expected more courtesy from *grandes dames* of the court). But he had foreseen this; he is accustomed to be thus greeted. If he feels it more than at other times, it is only in increased determination to conquer.

As the play proceeds, and the interest of the scene is unfolded, the audience becomes silent and attentive. Soon the actor is forgotten. Whether he is ugly or handsome no one then knows. It is in Orosmane and his sorrows they are interested, and for whom the tears are flowing from the eyes of *les belles dames.* Lekain has triumphed over prejudice; and many of those subdued fair ones who had exclaimed so eagerly, "*Ah! qu'il est laid!*" are now fain to say, as on several occasions was afterwards said, "*Ah! qu'il est beau!*"

Lekain was received *sociétaire,* as no other actor, before or since, ever was — by the king's command. "*Il m'a fait pleurer,*" said Louis XV., "*moi qui ne pleure guére. Je le reçois.*" It was vexatious to detractors, no doubt; but submission was imperative, for his majesty added, "*Je le veux;*" a short and ready way he had of settling vexed questions, of cutting, as it were, the Gordian knots of discussion — perhaps not always with general satisfaction; but in the present instance there were few who did not mentally respond "Amen" to his *dictum.* None, perhaps, rejoiced more in the success of Lekain than the man who had been set up by his opponents as his rival. Belcourt and Lekain were firm and attached friends to the end of their career. They began it together, and like their lives it had a similar ending.

The French stage owed much to Lekain. He has been called "*Le restaurateur des costumes,*" and has not less deserved that of "*Bienfaiteur de la comédie, et des comédiens.*" He succeeded in putting an end to the custom — so unfavourable to the actor, so destructive of scenic effect — of allowing a portion of the audience to appear on the stage. A row of seats was taken from the pit to accommodate those who had patronized the scenic benches. It was a great gain to the actors generally — an immense one to Lekain; and it was only fair that he, to whom no favour at all had been shown, should succeed in securing for himself a clear stage. By degrees — being seconded in all his reforms by Mdlle. Clairon, Belcourt, and one or two others — the actors were prevailed on to discard their red heels, paste diamonds, and court dress generally, for the proper costume of the character represented.

Lekain is said to have been absolutely hideous in the dress and turban of Genghis Khan. But that signified not. By his immense talent he soon overcame the first impression. Had he played it as a cavalier of the Henri IV. period, or in the grand costume of the court of Louis XV., the absurdity and his ugliness would have been uppermost in the mind; but in turban and Oriental dress Genghis Khan alone was thought of. To sink his own personality was his constant aim. That made him so great an actor. He loved his art, and

wished Lekain to be forgotten in the person he represented.

Is anybody old enough in these days to recollect Madame Rachel? If so, he recollects Phèdre. Her dress, in this character, was a reproduction of the classic robes in which Mdlle. Clairon — discarding the *panier*, the plumes, spangles, and frippery that Phèdre had before appeared in — made, it may be said, a second *début*, and received an ovation surpassing any triumph she had hitherto known.

Mdlle. Clairon was then about thirty, when a handsome woman is as a rose in its fullest beauty. She was eminently the tragic muse — not tender and pathetic like Mdlle. Dumesnil — but grand, sublime. The grace and dignity with which she entered and retired, when on the stage, made her sought after by the *grandes dames* of the court, who took lessons of her in "*la grande révérence*." The most apt of her pupils is said to have been the young Comtesse d'Egmont, Richelieu's only daughter, married to an old man; rich, and with numerous quarterings — very gratifying to her father — but she, poor girl, found an early grave; the victim of an absorbing, romantic passion for a younger and less richly endowed suitor.

Mdlle. Clairon was also accustomed to read with Mdlle. de Richelieu — receiving for each visit twenty-five *louis d'or*. The duke's carriage was always in waiting to convey her home; the

duke's coachman as regularly receiving from the magnificent actress ten *louis d'or* as a *pourboire*.

Marmontel was at that time the very humble slave of Mdlle. Clairon's caprices. He had lately been seriously ill, and the great actress — imitating Adrienne Le Couvreur's attentions to Voltaire — had beguiled the weary hours of his convalescence by reading to him the "Arabian Nights." She had given him, also, a room in her hôtel; Madame Geoffrin, whom he had displeased, having withdrawn from him the privilege of occupying a small apartment in her residence, though her *salon* was still open to him. Marmontel was much indebted to the talent of Mdlle. Clairon for the success of his plays; in which the fire of genius burns but dimly — for, as observed by a French writer, though Marmontel may be considered *un écrivain distingué*, his place is among those of the second rank.

Caprice might sometimes prevent his fair friend from doing her utmost with a part that did not greatly take her fancy. But at no time did she need the stimulating beverage whence Mdlle. Dumesnil seemed to derive the pathos and tenderness that created so much emotion in her audience. The chance of an overdose was, however, more fatal to an anxious author's hopes, than the caprices of the actress's dignified rival. The due proportion of water omitted from her draught, the gentle Dumesnil had, on more than

one occasion, become extravagantly energetic, ludicrously *larmoyante*, and, instead of the tears she was accustomed to draw from a sympathetic audience, was saluted with derisive shouts of laughter. An accident of this kind occurred on the first representation of one of Marmontel's plays. The poor author was in despair on witnessing her eccentricities and the noisy mirth they occasioned. But Mdlle. Dumesnil being a favourite actress, her patrons pardoned her; and at the next representation she made the *amende honorable* to Marmontel — securing, by her fine acting, a favourable reception for his play. For his obligations to Mdlle. Clairon he was made to pay largely. Her carriages and horses, her hôtel in Paris, her château in the country, and general extravagance, made large supplies of cash needful. Funds sometimes failed. Then Marmontel's friendship was put to the test, and a severe one too — for his own resources were small, and he was compelled to accept favours from friends to enable him to supply the temporary needs of a lady who probably never dreamed of repaying the sums he had borrowed for her use.

CHAPTER XIII.

A Musical Squabble. — A Latter-day Blessing. — Jean Jacques on French Music. — Rameau Converted. — Tweedledum and Tweedledee. — A Question of State. — The Grand' Chambre Banished. — "Dieu Protégé la France." — Birth of the Duc de Berri. — The Harbinger of Peace.

"LE *coin de la reine*," and "*le coin du roi*," were two hostile camps, defiantly facing each other from opposite sides of the stage of the Opéra de Paris — the battle-ground on which they nightly contended for victory. Those who ranged themselves under the standard of the queen were the allies of the Italian composer, Pergolese, and his "Bouffons," or *troupe* of Italian singers. The combatants who supported the king for the honour of France (and, indeed, the contention was carried on so rancorously that it threatened literally to end in a combat) were for upholding the supremacy of *la musique française*, and the superiority of native singers. Lullists and Ramists, who some years before had engaged in a similar struggle for pre-eminence, now formed but one camp. For Lulli, though by birth an Italian, had lived in France from boyhood to old age, and acquired there his

first notions of music. France had always claimed him as her own, and in his feelings and habits he was essentially a Frenchman.

The bitterness of spirit evinced on both sides, in this Franco-Italian musical squabble, is really difficult to realize. The cause seems so insignificant, in comparison with the energy so perseveringly expended upon it. It, however, helps to an understanding of the utter frivolity and *désœuvrement* of the society of the period, and the dearth there must have been of excitement, when every tea-cup storm caused so great a commotion in the *beau monde*. It was not only the *belles* of the *salons* — pardonably weary of knitting, and knotting, and purfling, and of the same dull round of chit-chat, *thé à l'Anglaise*, and scandal — who welcomed any little breezy diversion of this kind. The philosophers also, the regenerators of mankind, actually put aside for awhile their encyclopædical labours, and entered heart and soul into the musical quarrel.

Every one had in his pocket his treatise on music, or a letter of advice or remonstrance to Rameau or Pergolese, for which he vainly endeavoured to get a hearing in the *salons*. What if he knew nothing of music? had never given it ten minutes' thought in his life? He, nevertheless, might gratify himself by writing an essay upon it, though no one was likely to read it, and express his opinion on the subject, though no one

might care to hear it. Unfortunately, there existed not then that latter-day blessing, a legion of newspapers, so obligingly "opening their columns to the thorough ventilation" (if that be the proper nineteenth-century phrase) of any subject of general interest, or even of no interest at all. This "institution of our times" was then but meagrely developed. Otherwise, every one might have said his say in his "Jupiter," "Pallas," "Saturn," or other favourite luminary. And with the proud consciousness, too, of a world-wide circulation being given to his utterances. Whether he could reckon on being as widely read might have been as problematical as in these days, or as getting a hearing then in the *salons;* where everybody was willing to talk, but no one to listen.

Jean Jacques, who had some musical ideas, though he was not the great maestro he thought himself, of course wrote a letter on the subject. It was ludicrously violent, and its logical conclusion was as follows: "The French have no music, and cannot have any; or should they ever have any, it will be so much the worse for them." Rameau's partizans were violent also. He himself was far more moderate. His idea was not so much that Italian music was less scientific than the French, as that the French language did not readily lend itself to the vocal expression of florid Italian music — a succession of rapid roulades, and an overwhelming torrent of notes. Others

—among them Madame de Pompadour, one of the few qualified to give an opinion—while acknowledging that much of the singing was very agreeable, yet detected a great want of harmony. The Italian music was considered to fail also when attempting *les effets accordants*, which, from being overwhelmed by a multiplicity of notes, the ear could not seize, the effect produced being merely a *tapage*.

Yet the Opéra Bouffe gained ground rapidly. "La Serva Padrona," the music by Pergolese, the libretto by Goldoni, became an established favourite. The melodies were so lively and natural; while the singers, though comic, were graceful, easy, and elegant. Louis XV. adopted the opinions, musical as well as political, of Madame de Pompadour. But as she often visited the Opéra Bouffe, and greatly patronized the Italian, Petrini, who had invented the pedal harp (which entirely superseded the guitar, and was also for several years a formidable rival to the *clavecin;* then waiting for the improvements that were to give it the name of forte-piano), it was inferred that she was not insensible to the charm which Rameau himself confessed he found in Italian music.

Opposition to the Opéra Bouffe gradually subsided. Either the contending parties were weary of the strife, or it had lost its zest when the two great authorities, Rameau and Madame de Pompadour, became more than reconciled, as it

appeared, to the innovation. The latter sang the airs, and made them popular among the ladies; now so devoted to their harps. Rameau, whose well-earned fame suffered no diminution from the favour shown to Pergolese, was then seventy-one. He was accustomed to say that, if he were thirty years younger, he would go to Italy and study the new school of music, and that Pergolese should be his model; but that at threescore and ten it was too late to strike out new paths. He, however, continued to plod on in the old one, and lived to the age of eighty-three. His theoretical works were highly valued, and contributed greatly towards the advancement of musical science in France.

But while this furious musical hubbub was at its height, the wrathful contest at the Théâtre Français had risen to a white heat. From Paris to Versailles no subject was discussed with so much interest and vivacity as the rival claims of musicians and actors. Suddenly the dancers bounded into the fray; and it was on this wise. Many persons, who, like Dean Swift on a similar occasion in England, thought it "strange that such difference there should be 'twixt tweedledum and tweedledee," had forsaken the Opera for the Français. There, indeed, silence was often obtained by the sheer force of Lekain's great tragic acting, the opposition of his enemies fading away before it. Or if the tumult exceeded the limits

which the file of soldiers with fixed bayonets, that invariably surrounded the pit at that period, thought allowable, the police stepped in, and, under the protection of the military, arrested the offenders.

The play ended, the *ballet* began, and, pleasing all parties, had become exceedingly popular. The receipts of the Opera House, never a thriving establishment, though subsidized by the Government, began to fall off. The directors thought to remedy this by prohibiting the representation of *ballet* at the Théâtre Français, and accusing the managers of an infringement of their privileges. The "Comedians du roi" regarded this grievance as a question of state, and remonstrated against the pretensions of the Académie de Musique, in a memorial addressed to the council of government. Not meeting with the ready interference in their favour they had expected, they closed their theatre. "If they were not to dance they would not act." This step is said to have added greatly to the arduous duties of the lieutenant of police. Crowds assembled, clamouring for admission, demanding the play, but especially calling for the *ballet*.

As the doors continued closed, the military dispersed the people; the rougher portion of whom rambled about Paris, or filled the *cabarets*. M. de Sartines, then lieutenant of police, was a great advocate for establishing new theatres — a proposal that met with immense opposition from

the three already authorized by the state. He was accustomed to double the watch throughout the city during the three weeks of the theatrical vacation. Misdemeanours, he said, and even serious crimes, were so much more frequent when the theatres were closed. He considered that they kept the idle and ill-disposed out of mischief, and that it was better for the honest artizan to go to the play than to the *cabaret*. His manners and morals, he fancied, were likely to be improved there. Others, however, were of opinion that, although lessons of virtue might be received at the theatre, impressions of vice only were carried away. In this dilemma, two or three of the principal comedians were deputed to wait on Madame de Pompadour, requesting her influence to obtain from the *Grand' chambre* an edict authorizing the Théâtre Français to represent *ballet*, without let or hindrance from the Académie de Musique.

But the *Grand' chambre* itself was in a state of rebellion, and was banished to Pontoise, then to Soissons, and public business was at a standstill. Commanded by the king to return to the capital and resume its functions, the *Grand' chambre* declined to obey. The kingdom was, in fact, in a state of anarchy; yet singularly enough it was rich and flourishing. "If France is prosperous under the rule of such a sovereign as Louis XV.," said Benedict XIV., "there can be no stronger proof of the watchful care of Providence over his

people." Benedict, who was more sensible and rational than most of the popes, and who disliked the Jesuits, had been applied to by the king to settle the distracting differences in the Church. He had striven to conciliate opposing parties; to explain away, though not very successfully, some objections of the Parliament on the subject of the still troublesome Bull. But the Bull continued for some time, as lively and prankish as ever, until, happily, a *Matador* was found to give him his *quietus;* and, when finally disposed of, a song of triumph was chanted over him, and it was not exactly an *éloge*.

Gaiety and *légèreté* are so characteristic of the French, that trifles, light as air, will often suffice to arouse them from any temporary depression. The king was, perhaps, as striking an exception to the common rule as could have been found in his kingdom. At this time, the feeling between him and his people had become reciprocally so adverse, that the general situation of affairs — aggravated by the arrogance of the exiled Archbishop of Paris, who played the martyr — began to wear a menacing aspect. Louis's fits of melancholy and remorse grew deeper, and all the efforts of Madame de Pompadour to chase away his despondency fell short of their usual effect. He began to perceive that even she had lost something of her accustomed gaiety. "Madame," he said, "if you do not recover your spirits, I shall

have to dance, and sing snatches of song to make you merry."

Fortunately, at this crisis, the dauphine gave birth to a son — the Duc de Berri — afterwards the unfortunate Louis XVI. He was born on the 23rd of August, 1754. *Fêtes* and rejoicings banished the prevailing gloom and discontent. The Opera and the Théâtre Français found it convenient to forget their disputes, and to open their doors to crowded audiences. The king took advantage of the birth of this child to put an end to all rigorous proceedings against his rebellious parliaments and refractory clergy. A sort of general amnesty was proclaimed, celebrated by balls, illuminations, and fireworks; grand banquets at Paris and Versailles; operas, French and Italian, and *grands ballets*, in which the future career of the infant duke was shadowed forth by *entrechats* and *pirouettes*, as one of happiness and glory. His nativity was cast, and, alas, for the credit of the prophets! no cloud, even so big as a man's hand, could be discerned on the peaceful horizon, to indicate that the deluge — which even Louis XV. foresaw looming in the murky future — should descend on the head of this poor child, and engulf him in its desolating torrent. Never was so grand a christening — in splendour, the festivities, public and private, far surpassed those that took place at the christening of the first-born. This child seemed to come into the world as the harbinger of peace

to France, and to be received by both king and people as a pledge of their reconciliation, and the cessation of the domestic troubles that had recently so agitated the kingdom.

CHAPTER XIV.

Diplomatists in Conference. — An Old Custom Revived. — A Projected Dethronement. — Les Abbés, Sans Fonction. — Babet, la Bouquetière. — Drawing-room Priestlings. — A Pertinent Quotation. — "Le Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis." — La Duchesse de Choiseul. — L'Abbé Barthélemy. — Marmontel's Plays. — "Les Funérailles de Sésostris." — The Shadow of Favour. — Marmontel Consoled. — The Comte and the Maréchal. — Frozen out of Versailles.

OUNT STAHREMBERG had succeeded M. de Kaunitz as minister plenipotentiary from the empress-queen to Madame de Pompadour. His conferences with the all-powerful lady and her *protégé*, the Abbé de Bernis, ended in an alliance between Austria and France, and a determination to declare war against England, who had agreed to aid Prussia by the payment of a considerable subsidy. The king gave up entirely to his mistress the negotiation of the preparatory treaty, afterwards to be submitted to the Council of State, and approved and signed by himself. It is not here that its stipulations need be enlarged upon. It suffices to mention that the agents of the "high contracting parties," for the better concealment of their objects from those members of the govern-

ment who were opposed to an Austrian alliance, met at Babiole, — the *bijou campagne* of Madame de Pompadour, — and there, in her *boudoir*, mutually made known and discussed the views and pretensions of their respective sovereigns.

The jests and gibes of Frederick of Prussia contributed, no doubt, to the readiness with which both Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour entered into the views of Marie Thérèse, and determined also the Empress Elizabeth of Russia to assist in the attempt to dispossess him of Silesia. France was to be rewarded for her contingent of 24,000 men, with "*la Belgique jusqu'à Anvers*," and the extension of her frontiers to the Rhine. Austrians and French, united, were to take possession of Hanover, the electorate remaining in the hands of the French. But while Madame de Pompadour was engaged in diplomacy, the king at Choisy was besieged by the *grandes dames* of the court, waylaid at every turn, beset wherever it was possible to meet him. The "*longue amitié*," as the ten years' reign of Madame de Pompadour was beginning to be called, had lasted long enough, in the opinion of *les dames du palais*, who naturally were anxious that the king should select her successor from the class to whom the honour, from right of usage, belonged.

At this time, too, a custom introduced by Louis XIV., but which did not survive him,

probably because of the extreme youth of his successor, was renewed in consequence of the *Grand' chambre* and the parliaments refusing to reassemble for the despatch of their public duties. It was, that all petitions, either requesting favours or complaining of wrongs or abuses, should be made personally to the king. This was burdensome, indeed, to one who, besides his natural indolence, was increasingly subject to attacks of profound melancholy, from which neither his favourite courtiers nor the utmost efforts of Madame de Pompadour could rouse him. During her absence, tender-hearted ladies greatly availed themselves of the revived custom, to appear before the king as suppliants for unfortunate persons whose wrongs they were desirous of bringing under his notice.

Many an ambitious husband, also, put forward his wife to plead for place or promotion, believing that her beauty would prevail, while merits or claims of his own would be disregarded. His majesty was "*mortellement ennuyé*" by the persistency of the fair petitioners who sought to inspire him with an interest in the objects of their real or feigned solicitude, while seeking admiration for themselves. He was fast falling into a state of despondency and gloomy devotion, when these court intrigues, whose aim was to dethrone her, recalled Madame de Pompadour to Choisy. The count and the *abbé*, meanwhile, betook them-

selves to the Luxembourg, to the apartments occupied by Duclos — historiographe de France — to prepare there, unmolested, the *projet d'alliance* for presentation to the king in council. It was signed on the 1st of May, 1756.

The Abbé de Bernis, who had been admitted to take part in the discussion and preparation of this treaty of alliance, was then Secrétaire des Affaires Étrangères, and had represented France at the courts of Vienna and Madrid. His rise in the world had been rapid, and had astonished no one, probably, more than himself. Fortune had turned her back on him while he was modest in his aspirations, and had coveted only small favours. But when he made up his mind for a higher flight, the fickle goddess faced round, gave him her hand, and at a bound he attained wealth and fame. He was the son of a *gentilhomme de province*, and was born at St. Marcel d'Ardichel. His father had ruined himself by obstinate litigation concerning the right to a valueless portion of ground. De Bernis was one of those "*abbés, sans fonction,*" who owed their position to the abuses that sprang up in the Church at the time of the regency.

The younger sons of gentlemen, with little or no fortune, nor fixed means of subsistence, received the *tonsure*, put on the dress of an *abbé*, and at once formed part of the ecclesiastical body. Many such *abbés* figured in the *salons*, frequented

the most libertine circles, and, generally, led dissipated lives while waiting for fortune to throw in their way an eligible *bénéfice simple*—an abbaye, or prieuré, that did not necessitate residence. These were at the disposal of the king, who would often bestow one at the solicitation of some *belle dame* to whom a gay *abbé* of the *salons* may have been paying his court. In an instance given by M. Bungener of the prattle of the fashionable *salons*, there occurs the following:

"*Ah! cher abbé! bon soir. Votre abbaye est bonne?*"

"*Assez bonne, Madame.*"

"*Six ou sept livres de rente, peut-être?*"

"*Dix ou douze, Madame, environ. L'abbé de Saint-Maur a aussi une abbaye.*"

"*Allons donc! Il est encyclopédiste enragé.*"

"*Qu'est ce que cela prouve?*"

"*Sans doute qu'il a beaucoup d'esprit; et il vaut mieux que cette abbaye fasse vivre un homme d'esprit qu'un sot.*"

And so thought Madame de Pompadour, for it was to her that De Bernis owed his rapid rise from a poor rhyming *abbé, sans fonction*, to a full-fledged cardinal and royal academician. She is said never to have been able entirely to suppress laughter when she saw the little fat *abbé* of former times in the scarlet stockings and hat, robes and laces, of *son Eminence*, with twelve tall lackeys, in scarlet liveries, following, with solemn faces, this

bundle of ecclesiastical frippery. In his *sans fonction* days he had been generally known by the *sobriquet* of "*Babet la bouquetière,*" from the resemblance of his round, fat, pink and white face to that of the little rotund *bouquetière* who sold flowers at the garden gate of the Capucine convent. Voltaire laughed at him, and gave him the name of Margot. But the *abbé* was *un homme d'esprit;* and his stanzas and madrigals were better than many of Voltaire's, and than most of the large crop of poetic bagatelles that throve so abundantly in those times.

De Bernis's first meeting with Madame de Pompadour was when, a young girl of seventeen, she was invited, with her mother, to a ball in celebration of the marriage of a school companion with M. de Marchais. The *abbé* seems to have paid her those flirting attentions and compliments that were generally expected from these drawing-room priestlings, and which were rendered in exchange for dinners and suppers that would have puzzled most of them to pay *chez un restaurateur.* Very ceremoniously he begged of Madame Poisson to allow him to make use of her fan a few moments. Babet had probably fatigued and heated himself overmuch in the dance. When the fan was returned, it was discovered that he had written upon it a very gallant and *spirituel* impromptu. What more could be required to gain the firm

friendship of both mother and daughter? Of course he obtained it.

Had Babet been that day to consult the old fortune-teller? It was one of that class, who throve on the credulity of superstitious atheism, then so prevalent in Paris, that had foretold him of a great and sudden elevation in the world. Yet he could scarcely hope that it would come from the quarter whither he had been drawn by youth, beauty, and talent to offer his rhymed *galanteries*. He had rather been led to woo fortune's favours at the hands of M. de La Motte, Bishop of Amiens. But M. de La Motte, though not a rigid prelate, was little inclined to bestow his benefices on the rose-water *abbés* of the *salons*. Yet he gave young De Bernis a polite and smiling reception, chatting gaily with him on the news of the day. Not less gaily did he reply, when his visitor confided to him that he would be glad to be appointed to any small benefice in his diocese which the bishop might then have vacant,—

> "Quand on sait aimer et plaire,
> Qu'a-t-on besoin d'autre bien?"

said the bishop—quoting the refrain of one of the *abbé's* most popular ditties.

Soon after his first introduction to Mdlle. Poisson, L'Abbé de Bernis was reciting odes and singing *chansonnettes*, composed for the occasion, at the marriage festivities of M. et Madame Le

Normand d'Étioles. Three or four years passed by. The *abbé*, who during that interval had been M. d'Étioles's constant guest, then paid his court at the *toilette* of the Marquise de Pompadour, and of course was not sparing of his *chansons* and madrigals. And very graciously the *abbé* was received; for, as Marmontel says, "*simple bourgeoise, elle restait dans son élévation la meilleure femme du monde.*"

But notwithstanding the liberality of her patronage, and readily accorded protection to aspirants for literary and artistic fame, none of the poems, or other works, so numerously dedicated to her achieved the lasting fame of the fascinating work written by the Abbé Barthélemy, to please the Duchesse de Choiseul — "Le Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce." What are Marmontel's "Contes Moraux," and the whole mass of stanzas and madrigals of the Abbé de Bernis, compared with the charming offering that Barthélemy laid at the feet of his patroness?

Madame de Choiseul was *une jolie petite personne*, exceedingly fond of flattery. *Femme d'esprit*, of course. What woman of distinction was not in those days? Her *salon* was decidedly philosophical, and both she and her husband were favourites in the society of the *esprits forts* of the De Conti and De Boufflers school. The duke being high in the favour and confidence of Madame de Pompadour, and possessing also the secret of making

himself agreeable to the king, what favours might not be obtained by means of that adulation that was so acceptable to the duchess? The *savants* and *gens de lettres* who frequented her *salons* were never weary of chanting pæans in honour of the little divinity, whose sunny smiles and good graces they so earnestly coveted.

Her fantastically dressed negro dwarf, her mischievous marmoset, her King Charles spaniel, her rose-ringed parroquet, and other pets of her *boudoir*, had each and all found poets to sing their praises and extol their beauty. "*Les pieds, si blancs et si petits*" of the fair duchess herself had inspired odes innumerable. But the choicest offering hitherto laid at those little white feet was the historical tale she had commanded the *abbé* to write, and which he read to his duchess. He read, it would seem, as well as he wrote. His style, so lucid, so eloquent, with a *tournure de phrase* that charms and fascinates, pleased her so well that she would have his book read to her a second time, and declared that it would gratify her to listen to it a third.

Yet Barthélemy was less fortunate than De Bernis. The latter, with only his *chansons* and madrigals, was elected to an academic arm-chair before he had attained his fortieth year. The Abbé Barthélemy waited for that honour until old age. The difference may have been owing to favour in one instance, while in the other

there was only modest merit to claim the distinction.

But Louis XV. did not share Madame de Pompadour's predilection for the little rotund poetaster of an *abbé*. "*C'est un fat*," said his majesty. "*Un prêtre de mauvaises mœurs.*" But his promotion was rapid when it did come, though he waited some years for his first step of importance. For we learn from Marmontel, who had presented his homage to the reigning favourite in the form of a complimentary ode on the occasion of the foundation of the École Militaire, that the marquise, being interested in his poem, gave him permission to visit her with l'Abbé de Bernis. This could not have been earlier than 1751 or 1752. Duclos and the *abbé*, he says, were then accustomed to attend every Sunday at her *toilette*, and he at this time accompanied them, and was introduced by de Bernis, as the marquise had directed.

The *abbé* had then secured *un bénéfice simple*, at Boulogne-sur-Mer; and his ambitious hopes would have been fully attained had the pension of fifty *louis d'or* he then so earnestly sought been granted him. So says Marmontel. His own aspirations, he writes, were bounded by a desire for some post in the government that would usefully occupy him in the public service, and make him less dependent on public caprice. The public were not generally enthusiastic in their reception of Marmontel's plays. "Denis, le Tyran," was

one of the most successful; but their short-lived honours were more frequently due to the actors than to the author. Marmontel, himself, was then fully persuaded that he could never achieve a high reputation in dramatic writing. Not, however, from any disparagement of his own abilities, but because he believed that all the great subjects of history; all the great interests of the human mind; violent passions, tender emotions, tragic situations; every source of terror, compassion, hatred, love, had been so thoroughly exhausted by the great masters of dramatic art who had lived and written before him that nothing remained for the writers of his time to exercise their talents upon.

Madame de Pompadour, to whom he imparted his ideas on this subject, by no means agreed with him. She advised his continuance in *la carrière littéraire*, as the one for which he was best suited, and recommended him to follow the example of Voltaire, who replied to the rebuffs of fortune by the production of fresh *chefs-d'œuvre*. He received her advice as a command, and began forthwith to torture his brain for the subject of a new play. Nothing better occurred to him than the dismal one of "Les Funérailles de Sésostris," upon which he immediately set to work. When finished, he submitted it to his patroness. Having glanced through the MS., and marked certain passages she thought susceptible of improvement,

she returned it to him with a few verbal remarks in an undertone, when next he attended her *toilette*. The impression produced by this incident on all who were present — "marquises, dukes, countesses, princes of the blood" — was instantly manifest in the change of their manner towards the favourite's *protégé*.

Marmontel was astounded. "*Petits saluts*," he says, "*de tous côtés; doux sourires d'amitié, et, avant de sortir du salon, je fus invité à dîner au moins pour quinze jours.*" *Pauvre philosophe!* He made his escape as soon as possible, bowing his thanks all round, covered with confusion, as he says, and mentally ejaculating: "Ah! what must favour itself be, if the mere shadow of it falling upon me raises me immediately to such immense importance!" But this shadow of favour did not extend to "Les Funérailles de Sésostris," though it was sent to the Théâtre Français with a letter of recommendation, and an urgent request to produce it, with every care, and as soon as possible. But the public voice could not be enlisted in its favour. After its first representation, Marmontel wrote to his patroness that the public, instead of being deeply affected, as he had hoped, at "Les Funérailles de Sésostris," had been moved only to laughter. "*J'avais pris la liberté d'ennuyer le public, il a pris la liberté de me siffler.*"

"*Pauvre jeune homme!*" said the king, to

whom the letter was read. "The failure of his play must be as painful to him as the loss of a battle would be to me. Is there no means at hand of consoling him; no acceptable place vacant to offer?" The place of Secrétaire des Bâtiments, in De Marigny's department, was ascertained to be vacant; and, at the king's request, the crestfallen dramatist was appointed to it. Thus Marmontel was consoled, and to his great satisfaction; *en attendant mieux encore.*

By degrees, De Bernis also contrived to insinuate himself into the good graces of the king. He was concerned in the so-called secret diplomacy with which the indolent and vicious Louis XV. amused himself — playing, as it were, a sort of hidden political game of chess against Madame de Pompadour and his ministers; others making the moves, the king directing, but always allowing his agents and himself to be checkmated. The Comte de Broglie was one of Louis's principal instruments in the carrying on of this inane game of diplomacy. In the course of the Seven Years' War, he contrived to do France considerable harm by the undue confidence he placed in the aimless views of the king, as well as in overrating the importance of his mission, and imparting the same view of it to his brother, the maréchal.

The Comte de Broglie was of small stature and slight figure, with that consequential air peculiar to many of the diminutive specimens of humanity.

He was a choleric little personage also. The facility with which he could be put into a passion — Bezenval says — greatly amused women, who took much delight in tormenting him. By his own sex, we learn from the same authority, the little count was but slightingly regarded. The Maréchal de Broglie was cast in a rougher mould. He was not of too pleasant a temper, and his manners were more suited to the camp than the *salon*, where he was accustomed to let the world know how good an opinion he had of himself.

As a general, the reputation of De Broglie was excellent. Unfortunately, however, his jealousy would not allow him to co-operate cordially with the Prince de Soubise, who held the more responsible command, and the result was disastrous to France. The maréchal sought an interview with the king, for the purpose of explaining and justifying his conduct. But Louis received him in so icy a manner that the rough soldier, though he had in his time faced undauntedly a good deal of bad weather, was fairly frozen out of Versailles by the glacial chillness of its atmosphere. He had the folly to trouble his gracious majesty with a long memorial. The reply was an order to him and his coxcombical little brother to betake themselves to their estates.

It was an arbitrary proceeding on one side; and a very disagreeable one to submit to on the other. For when the château and family domain

were far distant from the gay world of Paris, an order to reside there was almost like banishment to a living tomb. But it was the king's favourite way of showing his displeasure—*C'était la mode, enfin; et pour tout le monde.*

CHAPTER XV.

Surrender of Port Mahon. — The Warrior's Welcome. — The Macedonian Phalanx. — Richelieu's Intrigues. — Le Maréchal d'Estrées. — L'Abbé de Bernis's Suggestion. — A Sad Catastrophe. — The King's Reply to the Dauphin. — A Perplexing Position. — The Prisoner of Dourlens. — "Nous Avons Deux Généraux." — Discontent of the People. — Royal Economy. — Le Jeu du Roi. — A Startling Event. — François Damiens. — In Distress for a Shirt. — Confessed and Absolved. — Damiens's Letter to Louis XV. — The Force of Habit. — Execution of Damiens.

EUROPE was actually at peace, though everywhere preparations were diligently making for war. Madame de Pompadour was at one of her *campagnes*, nursing her health, which at times was much affected by the pestilent vapours of the stagnant waters of Versailles, and the general unhealthiness of that royal dwelling. The old libertine, Duc de Richelieu, taking advantage of her temporary absence, was sighing at the feet of Madame de Lauraguais, with the view of obtaining, through a certain influence she still had with the king, as the sister of Madame de Châteauroux, the command of the troops on the southern coast of France.

A fleet of eleven ships of the line had been

hastily fitted out, and had already sailed, under the command of Admiral de La Galliçonière, for the Mediterranean. Falling in there with the squadron commanded by the unfortunate Admiral Byng, which was carrying supplies to the garrison of Fort Philip, at Minorca, the French fleet beat off the English and compelled the admiral to retreat, with some damage to his ships, to Gibraltar. At this juncture arrived the duke, to assume the command his *chère amie* had procured for him — his lucky stars always bringing him on the scene to reap where others had sown. At once the admiral embarked the maréchal and his troops, to attempt the assault of Port Mahon. The garrison being without provisions, or hope of receiving any, the prospect of starvation induced the lieutenant-general in command to capitulate. Thus, the strongest place in Europe, after Gibraltar, fell before the gaze, as it were, of a carpet warrior — *un homme à bonnes fortunes.*

The English shot their admiral. The French overlooked the valour of the naval commander to whom Byng had yielded, and the ladies of the court vaunted the prowess and sang the praises of the great general to whom Port Mahon had surrendered. Soon, very soon, he was on his way to the capital. What honours and substantial rewards did he fancy awaited him, as, with the triumphant air of a victor, crowned with fresh laurels and laden with the spoils of war, he

ascended the grand staircase of Versailles, and unexpectedly encountered the king!

"Ah! M. de Richelieu," said his majesty, "you are soon back again. How did you find the figs of Minorca?"

"Sire," replied the gallant duke, somewhat crestfallen, "I found them extremely sweet, but your majesty has changed their sweetness to bitterness."

As Richelieu was a favourite of Louis XV., it may be inferred from this reception that he thought less highly of his brilliant achievement than did the maréchal's numerous fair friends. They, indeed, exclaimed loudly against the "*dureté*," not to say "*brutalité*," with which the king had welcomed back their hero from the wars. During his absence war had been proclaimed, and he had set his heart on taking the chief command of the 60,000 men destined to march on Hanover. This army was then being exercised in manœuvres founded, it was said, on those of the famous invincible Macedonian phalanx, and which had been recommended to the notice of the king by the Comte de Saint-Germain.

But the tactics of Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great were ill-received by both subaltern officers and men, on whom the worry of them fell. In vain the count strove to inspire the troops with enthusiasm for his system by relating

how fields were won with their glorious phalanx by those heroes of the B.C. period, and their destruction of the Persian hosts of Darius. It was voted a *ruse* of the count's to introduce the Prussian drill. The army would not have it, and military discipline was endangered by an attempt to enforce it. There was now no Maurice de Saxe, with his company of comedians and band of fiddlers, to lead on the troops to victory. That great soldier — "great only," as Anquetil says, "at the head of his men" — died in 1750, his constitution worn out, as much by intemperance as by the fatigues of the camp.

Madame de Pompadour, like Madame de Maintenon at the height of her power, nominated to the chief commands in the army as well as to all high offices of state. She did not, however, follow the example of her predecessor, and make military promotion dependent on the more or less frequent attendance at mass and confession. In the present instance her choice was judicious. It fell on the Maréchal d'Estrées, who had received his military training under the Comte de Saxe. Second in command were the young Duc d'Orléans and the Maréchals de Broglie and Maillebois.

The hero of Port Mahon was much disappointed. Intrigues were immediately set on foot to displace d'Estrées, through the agency of women, of course, and their *chèrs amis* in the army; but under the direction of Richelieu him-

self — still the general *cher ami* of the *belles* of the court and the *salons*, in spite of his sixty years, all told, and the yearly increasing redness of his nose.

Le Maréchal d'Estrées appears to have been a more cautious general than the dashing military genius under whom he had learnt the art of war. Or from difference of mental characteristics, he did not so readily seize all the bearings of his own and his opponent's position, and, calculating the chances in his favour, at once make a rush for victory. When Maréchal de Saxe failed to achieve this, he usually manœuvred to sustain his military reputation by an able retreat. And he did not leave this to chance. He had a singularly clear foresight of the probable ups and downs of fortune in the course of a campaign; and, while taking steps to secure victory, did not neglect to provide against ignoble defeat.

Report after report arrived indirectly from the seat of war, complaining of the dilatoriness of the commander-in-chief, and the restraint it imposed on the ardour of the troops. Insidiously this was whispered about by the women of the court who were devoted partizans of the duke. And always with the "Pray, don't mention it," so customary with the *beau sexe* when desirous of an unfavourable story being rapidly and widely circulated. Jealous officers, and especially the Comte de Maillebois, wrote several despatches in disparage-

ment of Maréchal d'Estrées. It would seem that the military disasters of France have, in most cases, proceeded from the jealousy of general officers. The French troops, so brave and intrepid, so brilliant and ardent in attack, have not often been led by men who could forget their own petty private interests, and act in concert for the benefit and glory of their country.

It was suggested by the Abbé de Bernis that the king should take the field, to revive the ardour of the supposed dispirited troops. But Louis XV., at the age of forty-six or forty-seven, with his ever-increasing gloominess of mind, was but little inclined to undertake the harassing expedition which the gay Lothario of sixty was intriguing in all directions to be charged with. De Bernis lost favour by this suggestion. The dauphin also was desirous of being sent to the army. But it is one of the misfortunes of an heir-apparent to be doomed to idleness and uselessness. Besides, Louis XV. really disliked his heir. The Well-beloved attributed his son's wish to join the armies to an anxiety to win popularity with the troops; to supplant him, in fact, in the affections of the people.

The dauphin at this period had, indeed, need of some distraction. He was suffering from deep despondency and remorse, occasioned by a sad catastrophe, of which he had inadvertently been the cause.

Returning from hunting one day with the king

at Compiègne (a diversion he enjoyed so little that he was usually very absent-minded while engaged in it), he was suddenly roused from a contemplative mood by a great agitation, and crashing of breaking branches, among the trees on the borders of the forest. Fancying that one of the animals which had escaped during the hunt had taken refuge there, he instantly fired. A cry of anguish, and the exclamation, "*Ah! l'on m'a tué!*" thrilled the prince with horror. He alighted, and made his way through the coppice to the spot whence the sound proceeded, where, to his overwhelming grief, he found the Comte de Chambord lying on the ground, writhing in agony, and bathed in blood. He had ridden across the forest to join the dauphin on his return home, and, to avoid a long round, was pressing through the underwood, when the prince fired, the rifle ball entering his breast.

All efforts to save him were fruitless, the attempts to extract the ball only adding to his sufferings. On the second day after the accident he died, the dauphin having remained with him to the end. He took the count's family under his protection, and, contrary to all usage and etiquette — which occasioned a great commotion in the court — became sponsor to the count's new-born child, whose premature birth had nearly proved fatal to the Comtesse de Chambord, on hearing of the melancholy fate of her husband. The thoughtless society of the court was accustomed, jestingly,

to say that the prince might be brought to absent himself from Sunday's mass, and thus risk being put on a diet of bread and water for a twelvemonth by his Jesuit confessor, if a member of the Chambord family were to make the request. The usual reply to this was, "Not to save France would he forego a mass, were the country in flames at her four corners."

To his letter requesting to be allowed to visit the armies, the king replied, "*Votre lettre, mon fils, m'a touché jusqu'aux larmes. Je suis ravi de reconnaître en vous les sentiments de nos pères; mais il n'est pas encore temps que je vous sépare de moi.*" If the dauphin was also moved to tears by this affecting answer to his request, they must have been tears of bitterness for the bondage he was held in.

Intrigues at Versailles, treason in the camp, and the united supplications of Mesdames de Lauraguais, Flavacourt, and Luxembourg, at last prevailed with the king, in the absence of Madame de Pompadour — who was opposed to the pretensions of Richelieu — to send the duke to the army to supersede Maréchal d'Estrées. He arrived while all was enthusiasm for the victory of Hastembeck, which the Comte de Maillebois, by false intelligence and intentional delays in favour of the enemy, had hoped would prove a defeat. But the able generalship of his commander-in-chief had converted his expected disgrace into a triumph,

and the troops received their new commander with marked displeasure. However, D'Estrées left the army, and returned to Paris, while Richelieu overran and devastated Hanover — demoralizing the soldiery by the licence he permitted, and everywhere levying such heavy contributions that he was enabled, by this shameful plundering, to repair his ruined fortunes.

To have summoned a victorious general from his command to give an account of the unsatisfactory discharge of his duties, placed the king in a rather perplexing and annoying position. The matter would have been passed over silently and unnoticed, but the maréchal demanded a hearing. Of course he was exonerated from all blame. But Richelieu and the treacherous Maréchal de Maillebois and his accomplices were shielded from merited disgrace and obloquy by powerful influence and considerations of family and a great name. All proceedings against Maillebois were, therefore, suppressed. But, for form's sake, he was invited to make himself a prisoner for a few days at the Château de Dourlens, in the neighbourhood of which, having left his command, he then happened to be, new employments and honours awaiting his return to the court.

It was time that this tottering old *régime* should come to the ground. Louis XV. knew that already it was doomed. But he comforted himself with the consciousness that it would last his time; that

he would not be troubled to conform to any new order of things, though he exclaimed, more frequently than ever, "*Après nous le déluge.*" If the people had then little opportunity of speaking their opinions, they at all events contrived to make them known in song. If, to know what they thought of the respective merits of Le Maréchal d'Estrées and Le Maréchal de Richelieu could have gratified the former, he might have heard it gaily sung or shouted in all the most thronged streets and promenades of Paris, in the following lines:

LA RESSEMBLANCE ET LA DIFFÉRENCE.

Nous avons deux généraux,
Qui tous deux sont maréchaux;
Voilà la ressemblance.
L'un de Mars est le favori,
Et l'autre l'est de Louis;
Voilà la différence.

Dans la guerre ils ont tous deux
Fait divers exploits fameux;
Voilà la ressemblance.
À l'un Mahon s'est soumis,
Par l'autre il eût été pris;
Voilà la différence.

Que pour eux dans les combats
La gloire eut toujours d'appas;
Voilà la ressemblance.
L'un contre les ennemis,
L'autre contre les maris;
Voilà la différence.

D'être utile à notre roi
Tous deux se font une loi;
Voilà la ressemblance.
À Cythère l'un le sert,
Et l'autre sur le Weser;
Voilà la différence.

Cumberland les craint tous deux,
Et cherche à s'éloigner d'eux;
Voilà la ressemblance.
De l'un il fait la valeur,
Il fuit de l'autre l'odeur;
Voilà la différence.

Dans un beau champ de lauriers
On aperçoit ces guerriers,
Voilà la ressemblance.
L'un a su les entasser,
L'autre veut les ramasser;
Voilà la différence.

But it was not alone in songs and epigrams that the people were content to express their disapprobation of particular acts of injustice, and the administration of government generally. Widespread discontent existed; schism in the Church; discord in families. Menacing language, *propos dangereux*, even when his "sacred majesty" was the subject of conversation, often met the ever-open ear of the everywhere present lieutenant of police. Such was the agitation of feeling among the Parisians, that, with a keen remembrance of the unceremonious treatment M. de Berryer had

once received at the hands of the people — when the haughty and commanding bearing of his wife had alone saved him from their violence — he scarcely ventured to divulge in high quarters, except to his patroness, Madame de Pompadour, the disturbed state of the public mind.

To avert further displeasure at the increase of the imposts — necessitated by the expenses of the war — the duchess suggested to the king the advisability of setting an example of economy to the court by reducing the expenditure of the royal household. She hoped that the *haute noblesse*, who contributed nothing to the support of the state, might at least be induced to make the burden of taxation less onerous to the tenants of their estates by remitting something of their own exactions. She at once introduced the system on her own domains. Few, probably, followed her lead, or posterity would have heard more of the self-sacrificing grandees. The king, at her request, consented to put down several *équipages de chasse*, at least during the campaign; and to utilize for the purposes of the war a portion of the numerous stud kept up at each of the royal hunting establishments.

The frequent journeys he was accustomed to make to Compiègne, which he was rebuilding, to Fontainebleau, Choisy, and other places, in order to dispel his *ennui* by change of scene and residence, were, while the war lasted, to occur at longer

intervals, and with less parade and diminished retinue. There were to be no theatricals at Versailles, and the works then in progress at the Louvre were to be indefinitely suspended.

If these plans had been rigidly carried out, it is probable that the treasury would not have been more appreciably benefited than when, to supply the needs of the vainglorious despot, Louis XIV., gold and silver, priceless in the form of works of art, and belonging, not to him, but to his subjects, were sent to the mint, and there converted into an insignificant sum in *louis d'or*, *livres*, and *écus*. But it suited neither the convenience nor the pleasure of Louis XV. to be restricted by the economical arrangements he had, in a moment of *ennui*, consented to.

When there was no theatrical performance at Versailles, there was the *jeu du roi*, at which he lost or won a thousand or more *louis d'or* in an evening. If he won, he put his *roulcaux* into his own private purse or hoard, for he did not readily take from it; if he lost, he reimbursed himself by an *acquit au comptant* on the treasury — a draft in the king's own hand, to be paid at sight, and no questions asked.

But at this stirring period, Louis XV., sunk in slothful apathy, troubled himself scarcely at all, either about the progress of the war or the domestic condition of his kingdom. He may have derived some sort of languid amusement from the

embarrassment his private diplomacy occasioned to secret agents and recognized ministers — diplomacy which would have made both them and himself utterly ridiculous in the eyes of the European powers, had not the system of *espionnage*, bribery of couriers, and tampering with letters, public and private, been as diligently and systematically practised by other governments as by his own, and the king's secret by these means been betrayed to every foreign court.

A startling event, however, occurred at this time. On the 4th of January, 1757, as the king was stepping into his carriage to return to Trianon, having been to Versailles to see Madame Victoire, his third daughter, who was suffering from a slight indisposition, a man suddenly pressed forward and stabbed him in the side. It was six o'clock in the evening; dark, except from the flickering, fitful light of torches. This may have been the reason that a shabbily dressed man, wrapped up in an old brown *redingote*, and with his hat drawn over his eyes, was able, unperceived, to approach so near the entrance of the Salle des Gardes, where the royal carriage and the numerous attendants were waiting. So rapidly was the deed done that it was unnoticed by the dauphin and the Duc d'Ayen, who, with the gentlemen of his suite and officers of the guard following, were attending the king to his carriage. He himself was not aware that he was wounded;

but exclaimed, "*On m'a donné un violent coup de coude.*"

The assassin, François Damiens, might, it would seem, have escaped had he wished to elude detection. But, motionless, and with an unconcerned air, he stood amongst the royal lackeys, the dauphin being the first to observe him. Highly indignant that "*un inconnu de cette espèce*" should presume to approach the king, he called to him in an angry tone, "*Ne vois-tu pas donc le roi?*" At the same moment, the man's hat was knocked from his head by the bayonet of a garde du corps, and the principal écuyer seized him by the collar of his *redingote* and shook him violently. Not the slightest resistance did he make to this treatment, and not a word did he utter.

It was then only that the king, having placed his hand on his side, discovered blood upon it. "*Je suis blessé,*" he said, "*Cet homme m'a frappé. Qu'on le garde, et qu'on ne le tue pas.*" The wound was a slight one, probably owing to the many wraps in which the king was muffled up on account of the severity of the weather. He was able without assistance to walk up the grand staircase. But what seems remarkable — as he resided habitually at Versailles — a French account of this event, by a contemporary, states "there was no change of linen to be had for the king, nor a *valet de chambre* to attend him, as he

was then staying for a few days at Trianon." His majesty's stock of underclothing, one must therefore infer, was but a small one, and rigid etiquette, of course, forbade the use of the dauphin's shirts, even in a case of such emergency.

However, Louis, who began to feel rather faint, was at last undressed. Priests and physicians soon after arrived. The latter immediately bled him, though he had already lost much blood. Always greatly alarmed at the idea of death, he unceasingly demanded his Jesuit confessor and the Holy oils. The commotion in the palace reached the apartment of the queen, who, being informed that the king was taken ill, hastened to him. "*Madame, on m'a assassiné!*" he replied several times to her anxious inquiries. The penknife wound in his side had been dressed, and he had been placed in a bed "without sheets" (surely the queen might have lent him a pair), and le docteur Lamartinière had pronounced that the wound was not deep, and his majesty's precious life in no danger.

But neither king, queen, nor dauphin could be pacified until, in the course of the night, "*le roi fut remis, par l'abbé de Solini entre les bras du père Desmarets,*" his usual confessor. The ceremony of confession, absolution, and *les saintes huiles*, lasted several hours; after which Louis XV., with a clear conscience, went comfortably to

sleep — an ecclesiastic seated on either side of the bed, and inside the curtains, the dauphin keeping watch at the foot.

The next day, "*horreur générale!*" — the news had spread like wildfire. "The king had been stabbed in the heart, and report proclaimed that he was at the point of death." All the bells in Paris tolled a funeral knell (very disturbing they were to Marmontel, who, in the *mansarde* his friend Clairon allowed him to use as a study, was writing a tragedy, and these doleful bells reminded him unpleasantly of "Les Funérailles de Sésostris"), prayers were commanded to be said in all the churches far and near, for the space of forty hours. The rebellious *hommes de robe* of the parliament repented of their opposition to the decrees of *Le bien aimé*, and prayed their president to hasten to Versailles, to lay at the feet of their sovereign their homage and duty, and expressions of heartfelt sympathy.

Damiens, over whom it had been thought necessary to place a guard of sixty soldiers, wrote to the king:

"*Sire, je suis bien faché d'avoir eu le malheur de vous approcher; mais si vous ne prenez pas le parti de votre peuple, avant qu'il soit quelques années d'ici, vous, et Monsieur le dauphin, et quelques autres périront.*"

This letter added to the fears of the king, and served well the purposes of both Jesuit priests

and the *intrigants* and *intrigantes* of the court. A repetition of the scene at Metz, with Pompadour for Châteauroux, was fully expected. Comte d'Argenson had the folly prematurely to rejoice in his long-looked-for triumph. But though Louis would give no positive order for Madame de Pompadour's retirement from the court, he allowed it to be intimated to her that she would do well to retire and avoid the mortification of being *chassée*. For as the soreness of his healing wound more or less troubled him, so did he balance between resisting or yielding to the advice of those about him. The minister who undertook to intimate to her this disgrace was the man who owed his position to her favour and influence, M. Machault. And he appears to have executed his commission so offensively that it was replied to much in the same strain as the Père de Sacy's letter. "Madame de Pompadour received no orders from those who were accustomed to obey her." "*On parle*," she said, "*avec plus d'égards à un laquais qu'on jette à la porte*."

M. Machault was himself destined to be *jété à la porte*. The king had kept his bed fifteen days, with little occasion to keep it more than fifteen hours. Beginning to be *ennuyé*, he arose and, *par habitude*, went, for distraction, to the apartments of Madame de Pompadour. Before he left, there were on their way to the ministers,

Machault and d'Argenson, two private notes, which ran thus :

" *Votre service ne m'est plus nécessaire ; je vous ordonne de m'envoyer votre démission de secrétaire d'état de la guerre, etc., etc.*

" *Vous vous retirerez à vos terres, etc.*

"(*Signé*) " Louis."

The wretched Damiens, after near three months' imprisonment, was executed with barbarities that make the blood run cold to read of them — the worthless, contemptible Louis XV. having neither the magnanimity to pardon the man, nor the clemency to order any mitigation of the horrid tortures inflicted upon him, which an executioner, in full court dress, stood by to witness, and to ensure their being unsparingly heaped on the unfortunate creature.

The city of Amiens presented a petition, at the instance of M. Gresset, the author of " Vert Vert," to be allowed to change its name to Louisville ; but the Bishop of Amiens had the good sense to interfere, and *le bon peuple d'Amiens* were not gratified in their wish to perpetuate the remembrance of their fulsome folly.

Voltaire

CHAPTER XVI.

Voltaire, en Grand Seigneur. — Voltaire at Fernay. — Pretty Madame du Bocage. — A Pilgrimage to Fernay. — Death of "Cher Fontenelle." — Walpole and Madame du Deffant. — "L'Orphelin de la Chine." — "L'Orphelin" and the Jesuits. — La Guerre à Outrance. — "De l'Esprit" of Helvetius. — Jesuits and Jansenists. — A Grand Auto-da-Fé. — The Esprit of the Police. — Philosophism and Loyalty. — A Sojourn in the Bastille. — "C'est un Singulier Homme." — Philosophe et Frondeur.

IT was hinted to Louis XV. that Voltaire would like to return to Paris. He replied curtly, "*Qu'il reste où il est.*" The poet was then at the Château de Prangin, in the Canton de Vaud, elaborating, at the suggestion of his friend d'Argental, his play of "L'Orphelin de la Chine," from three acts, in which it was first written, to five. Voltaire had discovered, from unpleasant experience, that the favours of the royal philosopher of Potzdam were more than counterbalanced by the mortifications that invariably followed them. The honours and dignities with which he had been invested, he had been glad to resign, and with his niece and his secretary, after some skirmishes in doggerel verse, he had made an ignominious retreat from the Prussian

territory — eventually taking up his quarters in Switzerland.

Through fortunate commercial and monetary speculations, the competency he had inherited from his father had grown into an ample fortune. His writings had brought him fame rather than added to his income, and he was able to live *en grand seigneur*, first at "Les Délices," an estate distant a league from Geneva, and afterwards at Fernay, which was on French territory, without being at all dependent on the success of his literary labours. He would have been glad to have the title of count, which he sometimes assumed, confirmed to him — deriving it from the château and small domain of Tournay, situated between Fernay and Geneva, and bought from the president of the parliament of Dijon.

The disfavour of the court, which had become a very hostile feeling, would have passed away probably during his absence, but for the surreptitious publication at Geneva, from a falsified manuscript, of a work never intended, as sometimes asserted, to appear in print. Madame de Pompadour, who appears to have been greatly maligned in this work, had sent him, but recently, as a mark of her esteem and friendship, her portrait, painted by her own hand. On reading the passages in the work referred to, Voltaire felt that a friend at court was lost to him. "*Je suis perdu!*" he exclaimed, as he fretted and fumed, and stamped and

raged ; for, with all his philosophy, he bore with but little equanimity the minor ills and *petites misères* of life.

But though absent from the gay and busy capital, Voltaire kept up an active correspondence with "*les grands hommes*," MM. *les philosophes*. Marmontel and Chabanon were especially his *protégés* and disciples, and to them and his *élève*, La Harpe (who as a boy of ten, when left destitute, had sought the protection of Voltaire, on whom he was now dependent at Fernay), he looked to carry on his work, perpetuate his doctrines, keep alive his fame, and defend his memory. To D'Alembert and Diderot he forwarded his contributions to the Encyclopædia ; to the Théâtre Français, his new plays — Lekain, for whom the principal *rôles* were then written, going over to Fernay, where Voltaire had built a handsome theatre, to receive his instructions and suggestions, and to rehearse his part with him. Numerous short, satirical works, which a modern French writer has called "*feuilletons de premier ordre*," were produced at this time at short intervals.

Several of the earlier members of the philosophic brotherhood had died within the last few years — Hénault, the historian and *bon vivant ;* the President, Montesquieu ; the aged Fontenelle, almost to the last to be met with in the *salons ;* for he went the round of them, giving an evening to each in its turn, and in all of them the centenarian philoso-

pher was received with open arms. In his latter years he took especial interest in Madame du Bocage, and usually spent an hour or two in the afternoon with her. She was in vogue just then as a poetess, and used to read her pretty little namby-pamby sonnets to the aged *savant*. If, being exceedingly deaf, he heard not a word of them, he knew that his loss was not great; he could still nod and smile his approval, and pat the little, vain, girlish widow of forty-two softly on the cheek — very softly, not to damage its delicate pink rouge bloom.

Madame du Bocage had written a tragedy, "Les Amazons." It never attained to the honour of a representation, but it found favour with D'Alembert and Diderot, "*les dispensateurs de la renommée*." It is said to have contained some rather bold figures of speech — advanced opinions such as may have been looked for from Amazons, or *une femme philosophe*. Henceforth Madame du Bocage was saluted as the tenth muse. Her fame spread, and she actually carried off the Rouen Academy's prize for poetry. "Arrayed as a muse," we are told, like a carnival goddess, pretty Madame du Bocage set out on the fashionable pilgrimage to the Temple of Fernay, to do homage to "*le dieu* Voltaire." An ovation awaited her. As soon as she was seated, down on his knees went the gallant philosopher (he now used a cushion for that purpose, his knees beginning to feel the effects of

continual sudden contact with the floor). Holding up before her a laurel wreath, "*Madame,*" he said, "*votre coiffure manque un seul ornement; permettez que je vous offre le seul digne de vous.*" The goddess bowed her head, and the god laid his offering on her fair brow.

She extended her travels as far as Italy, and her fame preceded her. Sonnets innumerable were laid at her feet, and she was compared to all the stars in the firmament of heaven. Flattering letters from Voltaire followed her. The little woman's head was completely turned. When she got back to Paris, she was shocked by the news that "*ce cher Fontenelle*" was dead. "*Vraiment! quel dommage, 'pauvre cher Fontenelle!'*" He wanted a month and two days of completing his hundred years; and he might have eked out even a longer term, but the war disturbed him, because, as he said, it put an end to pleasant conversation. He disliked to see people around him in a state of excitement, carried away by feeling, and apparently in heated discussion. It disturbed the serene atmosphere of his own tranquil mind. In spite, therefore, of the anxious care of his lady friends, Fontenelle succumbed to this distracting state of things, and died.

Whether deserved or not, he had the reputation of being simply an egoist — never (so said his oldest friends and admirers) having experienced, in the whole of his long life, a single emotion

either of friendship or love. "It is not a heart you have there," said Madame du Deffant to Fontenelle, pointing to his left side, "but a second brain." She, however, had but little reason to reprove his egoism, her own affections being no less self-centred, except in the tenderness she sometimes displayed towards an old black cat, and, in her old age, a sort of senile fondness for Walpole. Self-interest still was the predominating feeling, even in her tender correspondence with him; as she sold his carefully preserved letters for three hundred pounds. Fontenelle did not write letters. He found himself sufficiently interesting to be well taken care of by the ladies, without the trouble of taking up his pen in their service. Now and then, those who made him most comfortable he rewarded with a neatly-turned compliment, slyly whispered in the ear. Only Madame Geoffrin, as we have said, made demands on his purse; and, at her bidding, he opened it for charitable purposes to the extent she requested.

It was the same with his philosophism; he gave his sanction freely to the *doctrines nouvelles*. He had been accused of atheism; but in his green old age he contributed towards the "regeneration of humanity" nothing more than a little occasional *badinage moqueur et railleur* — and that less for the edification of his *confrères, les philosophes*, than for the amusement of the ladies who gathered around him, and who would say at such times, as

laughingly they patted his hands, "*Ah! ce cher Fontenelle; il est méchant ce soir.*" When, at last, his accustomed arm-chair in the snug corner reserved for him was occupied no more, his loss was lamented for the space of a whole evening, and his praises were warmly sung by *les belles dames* of all the *salons* of Paris. In literature and science he held a very high place. Voltaire says, "*On peut le regarder comme l'esprit le plus universel que le siècle de Louis XIV. ait produit.*" He might have added the *siècle de Louis XV.* also.

Voltaire's play, before-mentioned, of "L'Orphelin de la Chine," had been produced in 1755, at the Théâtre Français. It was the first play in which all the actors wore the proper costume of the characters represented. Though Lekain and Mdlle. Clairon had begun and continued this reform, there were actors and actresses who, because of the expense of a new and greatly varied wardrobe, could only follow their example by slow degrees. Besides, some actresses were fond of displaying whatever diamonds and other jewels they possessed, no matter what character they were playing. Some actors, too, liked to fancy themselves for a brief space *des vrais talons rouges.* (Adam was once represented, wearing that distinguishing *chaussure* of the *haute noblesse*, and with silk stockings, diamond knee buckles, lace cravate, ruffles, sword, etc.) "L'Orphelin" was successful, despite Fréron's malignant criticism,

uniformity and propriety of costume being no doubt in its favour.

Two years after, the king having become timid, suspicious and more desponding since the attack on him by Damiens, and Madame de Pompadour's task more arduous than before, it was proposed that the actors of the Théâtre Français should, for his amusement, play at Versailles, "L'Orphelin de la Chine." The dauphin and the Jesuits were opposed to it, and, as usual, poor Marie Leczinska was put forward as a suppliant, praying that the king would not set his subjects so bad an example as to sanction a play so profane. There were passages in it, she said, unfavourable to religion and to his own royal authority. Louis consoled her with the assurance that he would then and ever protect the religion of the state; and M. de Saint-Florentin waited upon her with a copy of the play, authorized to strike out all that the queen objected to. She acknowledged that she had not read a line of it, but implored him to suppress the equivocal passages which she understood it contained. Her Polish confessor — for she would always confess in the Polish language — not having been present at this interview, the queen, by his orders, was the next morning again on her knees before the king. Again he raised his suppliant wife and embraced her with apparent affection, and she went her way consoled. But on the following evening "L'Orphelin de la Chine"

was performed, and met with great approval. Some omissions had probably been made; while the costumes, giving greater *vraisemblance* to the scene, this novelty in some degree prevented a too strict attention being paid, by otherwise watchful ears, to the sarcasm slightly lurking in the utterances of some of the characters.

But if Voltaire's play escaped suppression, an opportunity soon offered of attacking the prevailing philosophism under another form. The dauphin, forbidden the display of his military prowess in combating the philosophic king of Prussia, resolved to wage war, *à outrance*, against the sect whose doctrines had not only invaded the *salons*, but were rapidly infesting all classes of society.

The elder Helvetius had been dead some two or three years when, in 1758, his son presented copies of his work, "De l'Esprit," to the king, queen and dauphin; to Madame de Pompadour and other persons of the court. It had been printed at the Louvre, "Avec approbation et privilége du roi." M. Tercier was then *censeur*. He had not troubled himself to examine the work, but took for granted that it was a mere harmless *jeu d'esprit*. The presentation copies were very graciously received by the royal family; but to the dauphin, alone, probably, it occurred to read the book.

Oh, horror! he turned to the title-page. Could he believe his eyes! "Avec approbation et priv-

ilége du roi!" "*Je vais montrer la reine les belles choses que font imprimer son maître d'hôtel*," he exclaimed to the astonished dauphine, as, book in hand, he rushed out of the room and made for the queen's apartments. Great was her majesty's alarm; and, while the dauphin hastened to the king to denounce Helvetius and his book, she sent for her confessor. Absolution was needed for her thoughtless acceptance of so impious an offering. The king, too, shuddered. "Let the privilege be instantly revoked," he cried — "*Je le veux*, and Tercier be put under arrest." The Conseil du Roi forthwith assembled, and a decree was issued declaring it punishable with death to publish any book or pamphlet containing an attack on religion. At the same time the Encyclopædia was denounced in the Parliament, and the *privilége* granted to D'Alembert by M. d'Argenson withdrawn.

The Jesuits intrigued with great energy at this moment, hoping to maintain their footing in France. The Jansenists were as vigorously doing their best to oppose them, even to giving their support to the Encyclopædists. "De l'Esprit" — in which, as already observed, Diderot is supposed to have greatly aided Helvetius — was, like its reputed author, refined in tone, elevated in sentiment, while the acknowledged writings of Diderot were violent, coarse, and repulsive. Yet he is said to have concealed, under an unattractive

exterior, a fine nature and generous feelings. "De l'Esprit," suggested by "L'Esprit des Lois," was an exposition of the *esprit*, or peculiar character of the epicurean philosophy, as understood by Helvetius, a system of virtue and happiness practicable only by the rich; unless, indeed, every man were as large-hearted as Helvetius himself.

The Jesuits would have burned this kindly natured philosopher could they have had their way. Others, more merciful, would only have hanged him. But taking into consideration that to adopt measures too harsh towards the offending philosophers would revive the lately quelled dissensions of the Parliament and the Church, and their resistance to the king's decrees (for after Louis XV. was attacked by Damiens all parties had agreed to forgive and forget the past), it was determined to order only an *auto-da-fé* of the books, to serve as effigies of their authors. The two published volumes, A — B, of the Encyclopædia, "De l'Esprit," and half a dozen anonymous pamphlets, were, by the hand of the public executioner, then consigned to the flames. Two or three obscure individuals, also, who had too openly expressed their feelings, were lodged for awhile in the Bastille. Helvetius — of whom Voltaire says, "*c'était un vrai philosophe, qu'on a persecuté pour un livre et sa vertu*" — immediately, on hearing of the commotion raised by the intrusion of *esprit* into the royal household, resigned his

post of *maître d'hôtel de la reine*, and left Paris to enjoy, undisturbed for a time, the pleasures of life at his château of Voré. Tercier, liberated from arrest, gave up the office of *censeur*. He was dismissed from the appointment he also held in the Bureau des Affaires Étrangères. But, singularly enough, the king took him into his confidence and gave him the direction of the secret correspondence.

"De l'Esprit," which pictured happiness under an aspect so different from that of the savagism of Jean Jacques Rousseau, was near being attacked by "*l'homme de la nature*," but the government prosecution induced him to refrain. Christophe de Beaumont and other prelates launched their thunderbolts against it from every pulpit of Paris, and Versailles, and place of importance in the land. The Pope, Clement XIII., said of it, "*Qu'il réunissait toutes les sortes de poison qui se trouvaient dans les différents livres modernes.*" "De l'Esprit," in consequence, became so widely known, and so anxiously sought after, that it was speedily translated into every European language. Edition after edition of the work was smuggled into France from Amsterdam and Geneva, and was immediately bought up, so largely and eagerly was it in demand.

Hoping to put a stop to this, and at the same time to extirpate philosophism, the dauphin, at the Conseil du Roi, proposed that sentence of

exile should be pronounced against the Encyclopædists. The king hesitated to take so decided a step, and withheld his consent until, as he said, he should have reflected upon it. In the meanwhile he consulted with Madame de Pompadour. Her advice, supported by the opinion of the Duc de Choiseul — just returned from Vienna, and about to take the direction of foreign affairs — led him to decline to accede to the dauphin's proposal, conceiving it, as he informed him, fraught with danger to the peace of the kingdom. But the king was more intent on checking the authoritative tone assumed by the prince in the council chamber than concerned in the acts of the philosophers.

Louis XV. could never divest himself of the idea that every act of the dauphin was inspired by a yearning for popularity, which he regarded as seeking to supplant him in the affections of his people. That some feeling of attachment to the once "Well-beloved" of the nation still lingered in the hearts of the people had recently been evident in the general horror and consternation expressed by them when the life of their sovereign was supposed to be in danger from the attack of an assassin. Philosophism, therefore, had not yet extirpated loyalty and a veneration for the throne; though he who sat upon it was so unworthy a representative of kingly power.

But to attempt, at this crisis, rigorously to

extirpate philosophism, might, possibly, have served only to hasten on those heavy disasters which Louis XV. was far-seeing enough to discern that his own vices, added to those of his predecessor, were surely preparing for the future of France. Instead, therefore, of "*après nous le déluge*," as he was constantly exclaiming, the national calamities, in whatever form they might come, might, haply, as he saw, fall on his own head.

Let, then, the dauphin amuse himself by denouncing their books, and let a bonfire be made of them in the Place de Grève; but, as for the philosophers themselves, notwithstanding the decreed penalty of death, not a hair of their heads shall be singed. If one of their number should perchance be requested to sojourn for a week or ten days in the Bastille, let him have comfortable quarters, a sumptuous table provided, and a *cordon bleu* for his *chef*. No fasting on Fridays, except the *soupe maigre* that his servant will eat for him. Let him have writing materials, flowers, and music, and all the forbidden philosophical books. In a word, let nothing be wanting to make his visit pleasant. Such was the liberal treatment Marmontel received when, for "Belisarius" and "Les Incas de Peru," he was provided with quarters for ten days in the renowned royal fortress. He had really a pleasant time of it, and pursued his literary occupations undisturbed by the street cries

that so wofully annoyed him in his attic study *chez* Mdlle. Clairon.

Probably, but for distinguished patronage, less solicitude might have been shown for Marmontel's comfort and convenience. "*C'est un singulier homme, ce Marmontel,*" said Madame de Pompadour, after an interview he had requested of her, through Doctor Quesnay, at the time of the agitation concerning the denunciation of the Encyclopædia and "De l'Esprit." He entered with an air, *tragique à faire peur.* She fancied some terrible disaster had befallen him. "Madame," he said, "that which distresses me is the present state of the kingdom, occasioned by these quarrels between the clergy and the Parliament. I ask you to reflect, Madame, that the eyes of the country are upon you. Since the dismissal of M. d'Argenson from his office, it is known that all power is in your hands. If the vessel of the state be well guided, the blessing of the people will rest on you; if it should be wrecked, it is you they will accuse as the cause of their calamity."

Madame de Pompadour was disposed to smile at this lecture. But Marmontel preserved the same serious air. "Madame," he continued very gravely, "*Nous comptons sur vous.*" He then made his bow and retired. "*Quel singulier homme!*" she exclaimed. It is possible, however, that her advice to the king was influenced by this appeal. The philosophers had in her a sympa-

thetic friend, and the Duc de Choiseul, who, under her influence, was about to take the helm of the state, was himself both *philosophe et frondeur*, and absolutely under the domination of the *parti encyclopédique*.

CHAPTER XVII.

The Battle of Rosbach. — A Warrior-Priest. — Soubise at Lutzelbach. — L'Aimable Vainqueur. — Close of the Third Campaign. — "Liberté, Egalité." — Le Duc de Choiseul. — Braving the Dauphin. — La Divine Sophie Arnould. — Disappearance of Sophie. — Manners and Morals. — The Muse, Terpsichore. — The Muse at Longchamps. — An Opulent Danseuse. — A Real Sister of Mercy.

THE menacing attitude assumed by the dauphin towards the modern philosophy and its professors served rather to propagate the new doctrines, and to gain them adherents, than to check their dissemination among the people. The French, as De Tocqueville says, "*se façonnent difficilement à la liberté.*" And it has been sufficiently proved that heavy-handed despotism is a yoke that galls them but little, when it is associated with what is called glory, however vainglorious that may actually be. The news of a victory over Frederick of Prussia would, at this particular crisis, have raised the careworn, dispirited people from the depths of despondency to the glowing heights of the seventh heaven. There would have been *fêtes* and fireworks, and songs of triumph from one end of France to the other.

But, sad reverse of this picture, the battle of

Rosbach has been fought. And although the gallant commander-in-chief, "the *beau courtisan*," the Prince de Soubise, has managed to save his *batteries de cuisine*, and the vigilance and activity of the État-Major of his *chef*, Marin, have also preserved his camp service of plate from the grasp of the bearish Frederick, who would have sent it to the mint, yet Rosbach is a disastrous defeat for the French. It utterly neutralizes the first success of their arms in Westphalia, and Soubise, "*si bon viveur, si plein d'esprit, si toujours gai, et même, si brave*," must resign his command. This is grief inexpressible to Madame de Pompadour, whose firm friend the prince has been from her first appearance at court, and from whose valour, epicurean though he was, she had looked for great achievements.

A prince of the House of Condé, M. de Clermont, Abbé de St. Germain-aux-Prés, was despatched to the armies, at the private recommendation of Cardinal de Bernis to the king, to revive the tarnished lustre of the French arms. But the mantle of the great Condé had not descended on M. de Clermont. There have been warrior-priests who have led troops to victory, but the Abbé de St. Germain-aux-Prés was not a priest of that calibre. He had won his spurs on no well-fought field; he inspired no enthusiasm among the soldiery, and the generals in command under him criticized very freely the orders he issued. Per-

haps they were negligent in executing them, for twice, as the declared results of disobedience, portions of the army fell into an ambuscade.

When, however, for the third time the priestly commander-in-chief collected his forces, and led them to Crevelt, an elevated spot near Düsseldorf, his arrangements for receiving the enemy's attack were made with such evident want of tactical skill, that a speedy defeat, with a loss of seven thousand men, and a *sauve qui peut* for the survivors, brought disgrace on him and the military reputation of France. This great soldier-priest did not wait for his *congé*. He attributed the disaster to want of discipline and disobedience of his orders, and requested his recall. Singularly, however, it was the Prince de Soubise who, remaining with his army until the end of the campaign — the season being very far advanced — redeemed, so far as the gallantry of the French soldier was concerned, the dishonour his successor had heaped on it by taking the lead in an ignominious flight.

Seizing, shortly after M. de Clermont's defeat, an opportunity which offered of attacking the Hessians and Hanoverians, he compelled them to vacate Hanover, and replaced the French in the position from which they had been driven. Ten days after, at Lutzelberg, the prince effaced the stain which Rosbach had cast on his own reputation as a general, and won there also his *bâton*

de maréchal. Thus ended the third year's campaign of this calamitous war.

But however serious the reverses of France, all is well with the Parisians if the misfortunes of the country do but afford them a theme for a witty jest or a song. When the Prince de Soubise returned to Paris, a numerous company of the wild young rakes of the capital danced for a whole night under the windows of his hôtel to a tune, just then the rage, called "La danse de l'aimable vainqueur." Occasionally, to allow the dancers a short respite from their fatigues, the prince was serenaded to the same tune, with the following epigram, in allusion to the *ruse* by which his army fell into the hands of the Prussian king at Rosbach. All Paris (then meaning all France) was joyously singing or shouting:

"Soubise dit, la lanterne à la main;
J'ai beau chercher, où diable est mon armée?
Elle était là pourtant hier matin;
Me l'a-t-on prise, ou l'aurais-je égarée?
Ah! je perds tout; je suis un étourdi;
Mais attendons au grand jour, à midi.
Que vois-je ô ciel! que mon âme est ravie?
Prodige heureux! la voilà, la voilà!
Ah! ventrebleu, qu'est ce donc que cela?
Je me trompais, c'est l'armée ennemie."

Le Chevalier de Mirabeau, uncle of the orator, was the reputed author of this popular epigram.

The soldier-abbé of the princely house of Condé

also escaped not the jests and gibes of the populace. On the quays, and in all the most frequented parts of Paris, various songs, recording his deeds of arms, were sung to the accompaniment of a violin, and thousands of copies were sold among the people. Generally, they were contemptuous in tone, for instance, the following:

"Moitié casque, moitié rabat,
Aussi propre à l'un comme à l'autre,
Clermont prêche comme un soldat,
Et se bat comme un apôtre.

"Est-ce un Abbé? L'Église le renie.
Un général? Mars l'a bien maltraité.
Mais il lui reste au moins l'Académie:
N'y fut-il pas muet par dignité?
Qu'est-il enfin? Que son mérite est mince!
Hélas! j'ai beau lui chercher un talent;
Un titre auguste éclaire son néant,
Pour son malheur le pauvre homme est un prince.
Moitié casque, etc."

It was at the close of this third campaign that Cardinal de Bernis suggested the advisability of making proposals of peace. Madame de Pompadour indignantly rejected the very idea of peace under such circumstances; her promise had been given to her "*chère cousine*" of Austria to support her cause, and her honour was concerned in supporting it to the utmost resources of France.

So the war went on. Another army was raised in the spring; fresh supplies were called for, and the Fermiers généraux, in order to furnish them, pressed more heavily on the people. With depopulated villages and the provinces sinking under the burden of taxation, no wonder that murmurings arose. "*Liberté, egalité!*" as first advanced by Montesquieu, were, though in a different sense, pleasant sounds in the ears of the oppressed. They interpreted them as being placed on an equality with *les grands seigneurs* in their exemption from forced taxation; with liberty, of course, to contribute what they would towards the needs of the state. This, in the case of *les grands seigneurs*, was usually nothing at all.

But while the provinces were doomed to much sorrow and suffering, Paris was gay, little affected, apparently, by the disasters of the war. Philosophism throve, and the "*grande œuvre* of the eighteenth century," as the projectors and contributors were pleased to call their Encylopædia, still went on. The determination expressed by the dauphin to continue his raid on that and similar publications, "until the accursed thing should be rooted out of the land," furnished the *esprits forts* with a theme for many a *spirituel* couplet, and many a witty jest that amused the charming little idol of the *salons*, the philosophical Duchesse de Choiseul.

The Duc de Choiseul was not only Ministre des

Affaires Étrangères, and Ministre de la Guerre, but, under Madame de Pompadour, he ruled the state, every department of government being directed by persons wholly devoted to him. Though his appearance was commonplace, and his countenance plain to ugliness, he had an irresistible charm of manner, and *l'art de séduire* to an extent possessed but by few. One of the most brilliant men in society, he was yet little to be relied upon; but he was devoted to Marie Thérèse and to Madame de Pompadour, and was far more influenced by the latter than she was by him. In this respect, however, he but followed the fashion of the time; the extraordinary deference which men then paid to women, without holding them in very high esteem, and in some instances utterly contemning them, is very remarkable.

The duke's courtly manners, the fluency and eloquence with which he expressed himself, and the talent or tact that enabled him readily to impress the mind of another with the sentiments which seemed to animate his own, made him a most acceptable minister to Louis XV. And none the less acceptable was he for having braved the dauphin, and reproached him for his subservience to the Jesuits, who, in M. de Choiseul, had an uncompromising enemy. The dauphin, in a memorial presented to Louis XV., represented him as intriguing against them. "*Ah! fi! Monsieur!*" the duke had replied to the prince's ener-

getic defence of the Society of Jesus, "*un dauphin peut-il être aussi chaud pour des moines?*" And again, "*peut-être, Monsieur,*" he said, "*serai-je assez malheureux pour être un jour votre sujet, mais certainement je ne serai jamais à votre service.*" The dauphin complained to the king. He replied that M. de Choiseul had reason to feel wounded by the charge he had brought against him. Such expressions, prompted by his just indignation, must therefore be overlooked.

But society, philosophical and otherwise, was far less interested at this time in the political situation of France, the ill success of the war, and the distress of the provinces, than in the *début* of a new *déesse de l'opéra* — the youthful divinity, Mdlle. Sophie Arnould, whose various perfections created a sensation amounting to a *fureur*. Her voice was declared enchanting; and her method pronounced perfect by the critics, amongst whom was the aged Rameau.

Her beauty captivated all men, turned the heads of both *grands seigneurs* and philosophers, broke the hearts and emptied the purses of a few rich Fermiers généraux, and wealthy adorers among *la haute bourgeoisie*.

Her parents are said to have objected to her appearing as a public singer. But as they were people of no higher grade than that of keepers of a lodging-house, or *hôtel-garni*, in the Rue des Fossés St. Germain, it is far more likely that,

discovering their daughter had a fine voice, their object was to train her for the operatic stage. Otherwise, the instruction, expensive probably, of professors of such high pretensions as Mdlles. Clairon and Fell—the former giving her lessons in declamation, the latter in singing—would scarcely have been thought necessary for her.

Marmontel, from his intimacy with Mdlle. Clairon, had had the opportunity of seeing and hearing her promising pupil. At one of his *toilette* visits to Madame de Pompadour—herself so talented a musician—he spoke of this youthful prodigy. He praised her beauty, her liveliness, her wit, her surprising vocal charm and ability, with a warmth he was, perhaps, scarcely aware of—for he, like the rest of humanity's regenerators, was also under the spell. His patroness smiled at his enthusiasm, and expressed a wish to hear the young lady sing. The following day, Madame de Pompadour being at the Hôtel d'Évreux, Mdlle. Sophie was introduced to the *quasi* queen of France, and sang the music she put before her so much to her satisfaction that she recommended her to make her *début* without further delay.

Sophie Arnould was but seventeen when she made her first public appearance; but in no very prominent part. Between that and her second *début* an interval of some weeks occurred, during which "What had become of '*la belle Sophie*'?" was a question anxiously discussed by the *beau*

monde in every *salon*. There were ladies who hoped that she would never return — ladies whose fickle *amis intimes* had forsaken them, to lay *bouquets* and *billets-doux* and their own elegant selves at the feet of this new star of the opera. But all in good time, *la belle Sophie* came back, and her *début* in a new opera, by Dauvergne, was announced. She was greeted with a storm of applause. All Paris flocked to hear the truant *prima donna*, whose fame was increased far beyond what the finest singing ever heard would have obtained for her, when it was known that her absence was owing to her elopement with the Comte de Lauraguais.

For a wager, he had engaged a room at the *hôtel-garni*, and, introducing himself as having just arrived from the country with a tragedy in his *valise* that he hoped to get received at the Théâtre Français, took the opportunity of wooing the youthful songstress. Before a fortnight had elapsed, they fled together. At a *petit souper*, given to his friends who were in the secret, he announced his success, and that his wager was won. La Comtesse de Lauraguais, the lady at whose feet the Duc de Richelieu had sighed, and had obtained through her intercession with the king his late employments in the army, was the wife of this gallant count, now the *ami intime* of Mdlle. Sophie Arnould. Such were the manners and morals of *Le Siècle de Louis XV.!*

Mademoiselle Sophie Arnould

The career of Sophie Arnould was one of dissipation and reckless extravagance. She lost very early the beauty of her voice — it became even disagreeable; but having amassed wealth, she was still able to live in some style, and give balls and *fêtes*. Like many other actresses of her day, she was reduced to great straits by the Revolution. But she was more fortunate than some of them, who, in the evening-tide of life, from the loss of their property, fell into abject poverty.

Another theatrical celebrity, who made her *début* a year or two later, shared with Mdlle. Arnould the enthusiasm and favour of the *beau monde*, the philosophic circle and public generally. This was the famous *danseuse*, Mdlle. Guimard. The dancer rivalled the singer in reckless extravagance and dissipation; but beauty was not one of her attributes. Yet she possessed what was termed "infinite fascination," and had as many adorers at her feet as the fair Sophie herself. Her form was sylph-like and perfect in grace; and, for lightness and elegance in her movements and attitudes, she might have served painter or sculptor as a model for the Muse Terpsichore. Connected with her Hôtel No. 9, in the Chaussée d'Antin, she erected an elegant little theatre, that comfortably seated five hundred persons, and, in spite of the opposition of the four Gentilhommes de la chambre du roi — who then regulated theatrical matters — she induced the principal members of the Comédie

Française and opera *troupes* to perform at her "Temple de Terpsichore," as she had named her *bijou théâtre*.

She gave suppers three times a week — suppers that rivalled the artistic creations of Mouthier for the *petits-appartements*, or those of the more famous Marin, for the entertainment of the friends of the Prince de Soubise. In the costliness of the crystal and plate of her table-service; in the taste and elegance of the floral decorations — choice exotics obtained from a distance, regardless of expense, of course, or products of the conservatories she had built in the grounds of her hôtel — none of the suppers of the *salons* of Paris could bear comparison. The *élite* of both sexes of the dissolute society of the capital were her guests, and Mondays were specially devoted to them. On Wednesdays she received the philosophical world and *gens de lettres*, and on Fridays she entertained her *camarades de théâtre*. For several years, at the annual promenade of Longchamps, no equipage was so anxiously looked for as that of this modern Phryné. In expensiveness and elaborate ornamentation, as well as in the beauty of the horses, it surpassed all others, as did also the splendid *toilette* of its occupant.

Notwithstanding all this ostentation and display, her admirers have declared that she rarely, if ever, overstepped the limits of good taste. Yet when it is borne in mind that this cynosure of all eyes

was but *une fille de l'opéra* parading her ill-gotten wealth in the face of the *élite* of society, one must differ from her admirers, and consider that not only had Mdlle. Guimard very far overstepped the limits of good taste, but that "the *élite*" who looked on her doings so approvingly had themselves lost sight of them. But these were signs of the times.

In 1786, Mdlle. Guimard disposed of her hôtel by lottery. Two thousand five hundred tickets were issued, and sold at a hundred and twenty *francs* each, the whole amounting to twelve thousand pounds. This was previous to accepting an engagement in London, where she appeared, at the Haymarket Opera House, in 1789, being then forty-seven years of age, a rather late period of life to take the town by storm as a sylphide. But the Opera House was burnt down in the early summer of that year, the *prima donna* of the *ballet* and other *danseuses* narrowly escaping a frightful death. Perhaps she felt that her day as a dancer was over, that her airy grace and power of fascination were on the wane. Men's minds were then greatly troubled, the whole country was agitated, and Paris, in 1790, would not have looked so complacently on the gilded Longchamps equipage of *une danseuse* as in 1760. Very wisely, therefore, Mdlle. Guimard retired from the scene of her many triumphs; married M. Despréaux, the ballet-master, and lived

as unpretendingly, on the snug little fortune she had saved from the superabundance of her former days, as she had lived ostentatiously at the brilliant height of her career. One excellent *trait* in her character should cover a multitude of the *faiblesses* of her youth — she was truly charitable. During those terrible years that followed her return to Paris, she privately, but extensively, relieved the distress of the poor, and comforted the sorrowing with her sympathy — drawing upon herself no attention, but doing her good work quietly and, as it appears, without molestation. She survived until 1816.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Lady Romancists. — "La Nouvelle Héloïse." — Gallantry and Politesse.—Lackadaisical Vice.—Madame d'Épinay's "Tame Bear."— Le Baron Grimm. — L'homme Sauvage in Love. — La Comtesse d'Houdetot. — A Warrior-poet and His Lady-love. — Le Château de Montmorency. — "Émile" Denounced and Burnt. — Popularity of "Émile." — "Après Nous le Déluge."—"Le Contrat Social."—"I Do Not Love You, Sir." — Jean Jacques Marries Thérèse. — "Au Diable Pythagore!" — Rousseau versus Ragonneau.

THE *fureur* produced by the *débuts* of the *prime donne* of dance and song had scarcely subsided ere a new sensation was created in the *salons* by the "Nouvelle Héloïse" of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Works of fiction were comparatively few in those days; so that when ladies not deeply tinged with the new philosophy became weary of purfling and *persiflage*, and desirous of filling up an idle hour or two with a little light reading, they were not perplexed in their choice of a work by an *embarras de richesses*, in the form of an endless list of attractive titles from the French Mudie of the day.

Heroics and pastorals had long gone out of fashion. Society had now so many other dis-

tractions that it had neither time, nor, indeed, the old eager appetite, for the consumption of eight or ten goodly-sized volumes, filled with the deeds of valiant knights in the service of beauty oppressed, or with the adventures of a roaming company of gentle shepherds and shepherdesses of high degree. In most instances the slim duodecimo had succeeded the portly quarto. The pen of Madame Riccoboni produced several short romances, and, together with that of Madame Leprince de Beaumont,* drove into exile the extravagant, but once popular, nightmare stories of the Abbé Prévost. There were also the equivocal "Contes Moraux" of Marmontel, the rhymed *bagatelles* of Saint-Lambert, and of the Chevalier de Boufflers, author of the favourite tale of "Aline" — afterwards, as "La Reine de Golconde," made the subject of an opera, Aline being one of the original parts of Sophie Arnould.

* Madame de Beaumont was the sister of the painter, Leprince, whose landscapes and Russian interiors, in the style of Teniers, have been much admired by connoisseurs. It is related of this artist that, being desirous of visiting Russia, he went to Holland, and there embarked for St. Petersburg. On the voyage the vessel was captured by pirates. As they were stripping it and plundering the passengers, whom they were about to make prisoners, Leprince, perceiving they had not thought his violin worth notice, took it up, and began to play an adagio. He was a finished performer, and his music so enchanted his captors, that to express their admiration they returned his property, and conveyed this modern Arion safely to his destination.

Rousseau's three octavo volumes * were received with the enthusiasm one would naturally expect from the prevailing false sentimentality of the women of the period, and the thorough moral corruption that pervaded the *beau monde* generally. Like many other of the writings of that day, these so-called letters are so repellingly dreary that, except for the chance of meeting with some trait of the manners or feeling of the time, none, probably, would be led to bestow a glance on them, much less read through the whole of the collection. Some few letters of this kind and descriptions of scenery may be found in them; for the rest, they are nauseously maudlin. The girl Julie, whose letters contain not a trace of girlish feeling or expression (and how should they, emanating from a brain and mind so diseased as poor Jean Jacques's?); her ridiculous cousin; the pattern Englishman, Milord Bomston; the amiably-imbecile husband, Walmer, and Saint-Preux — Rousseau himself, no doubt, as an imaginary *Preux chevalier* — are as uninteresting a set of preaching, whining, miserable sinners as could well be gathered together.

The author's preface to this delightful work is singular. It concludes thus: "If, after reading through this book, any one should presume to blame me for publishing it, he is at liberty to do

* Third Edition, Amsterdam, 1762.

so, and to tell it to all the world. But let him not come and tell it to me: I feel that, to the end of my life, I could never esteem that man." What a terrible announcement! But "Héloïse" was not written for men. All books, as he says, were at that time written for women; to please and amuse women was every man's object. French gallantry had so decreed; or, more correctly, French *politesse*. For it was also decreed that *un homme du monde*, while bound to be the slave of every woman's whims, his wife's not excepted, should yet lightly esteem, even contemn, the whole sex. Woman was to him a creature whose arts he knew, and whom he despised, though, as the weaker vessel, he politely placed her on a pedestal, and flattered her vanity by affecting to be her very humble slave and adorer.

Everything, therefore, depended on woman's will and pleasure. No book could succeed, no author, whatever his merit, acquire literary reputation, unless woman set her seal on it. Poetry, literature, history, philosophy, even politics, no matter what subject, in fact, authors might choose, they had to bear in mind that it must be treated in a style acceptable to *les jolies femmes* — and few Barthélemys were there among them. The Bible itself had recently been cut up and arranged in *histoirettes galantes* for their amusement. Such was then the ascendency of woman. Jean Jacques bowing before it, wrote

his "Héloïse" for the edification of *les belles dames* of the *salons*. "*Pour un peuple corrompu,*" he says, "*il faut des romans.*" His own *roman* he considered more suited for women than were books of philosophy. And for a time it appears they thought so, too. The one subject of conversation was Rousseau's book, and the glowing language in which he had depicted the fervour of intense love. So skilfully had he varnished lackadaisical vice, that in his and their eyes it looked almost like, or even better than, virtue itself. "Ah!" exclaimed *les belles dames*, in chorus:

"Que j'aime cet auteur!
Et je vois bien qu'il a le plus grand cœur du monde.
Hélas! faibles humains quels destins sont les nôtres;
Qu'on a mal placé les grandeurs,
Qu'on serait heureux si les cœurs
Étaient faits les uns pour les autres!"

Madame d'Épinay's "tame bear," as Jean Jacques was called, became at once *la mode*, the pet of the *salons*, and flattery was lavished upon him unsparingly. He was residing at this time at the hermitage constructed for him at Les Chevrettes, the estate of Madame d'Épinay, in the Vallée de Montmorency. There he had written his "Héloïse," portions of which he occasionally sent to his patroness, who greatly admired his work (as naturally she would), and by extravagant praises in the *salons* heralded it, as it were, and put expectation on tiptoe for its appearance.

Madame d'Épinay was *une femme très à la mode*, and her *salon* in Paris one of the most brilliant of the wealthy *financier* class. She had married M. de Lalive de Bellegarde, from whom she was separated. Her *ami intime* was Baron Grimm, then Chargé d'Affaires of the Duc de Gotha. Rousseau, it has been said, introduced him to Madame d'Épinay. But it is far more likely that he was himself introduced by Grimm; for some years before Rousseau first visited Paris, poor and on foot, his hopes of a livelihood based on the acceptance of his system of musical notation, Grimm, then a young man of twenty-two, was a frequenter of its most distinguished *salons*. He had the reputation of being the best-informed man in the capital. It was, indeed, his business to keep himself *au courant* of all that was passing in the court, in society, and, as far as he could, in the ministerial cabinet also. He corresponded with Frederick II., and other sovereigns of the North, from 1753, and was *nouvelliste-en-titre* to the Duchess of Saxe-Gotha, the letters addressed to her passing afterwards, in succession, to seven of the ducal or electoral German courts. An inclination for collecting the *on-dits* of the day, and the facilities his position afforded him for obtaining information of greater importance, rendered his correspondence both valuable and interesting.

Rousseau was jealous of Grimm, and of course thought him his enemy. Greater folly still, he fell

desperately in love with the Comtesse d'Houdetot, the young sister-in-law of Madame d'Épinay, as she was walking in the park of Montmorency. This lady was deeply tinged with the fashionable philosophy. *Les grands hommes de Plutarch* were daily growing more and more into the good graces of the ladies, and Madame d'Houdetot's admiration of them had induced her to surround the garden of her *campagne* at Sanois with statues of that noble army of the *élite* of humanity. This may have been an attraction to Jean Jacques. Surprised, yet amused, to find that she had undesignedly ensnared "*l'homme sauvage*," his awkward attempts to pay his court to her provoked more smiles than frowns. Jean Jacques thus encouraged, as he fancied, persevered in his suit, waylaid the countess in the park, apprized her of the state of his heart, and, alas! was repelled. None of these *grandes dames*, though privileged, at this "*époque de mœurs faciles*," to have a train of professed lovers, appear to have been desirous of leading captive poor Rousseau, or accepting him as *ami intime*, even at the height of his favour.

But Thérèse, whose watchful eyes had discovered in his restlessness, his agitation and unusual attention to *toilette*, that he was engaged in some affair of which the secret was withheld from her, took the first opportunity of following the gay Lothario. What was her astonishment, poor

woman, to see "her man" in hasty pursuit of a fine lady, who, when Jean Jacques overtook her, turned round and with a merry laugh made him a sort of mocking low curtsey. He, however, seemed ready to fall on his knees before her, while she continued laughing gaily on at the poor woebegone-looking creature. Thérèse, as she afterwards said, could scarcely refrain from rushing forward and letting both lady and gentleman know what she thought of them; but she prudently took a different course. She made herself sure that the lady was the Comtesse d'Houdetot, and being fully persuaded that she was artfully seeking to seduce Jean Jacques from his allegiance, returned moodily home.

Of the reception he met with on his return to the hermitage no record has been left. But early on the following morning Thérèse went over to Madame d'Épinay and laid her complaint against Madame la Comtesse, who, she said, was doing her best to deprive her of "her man." Madame d'Épinay was highly indignant, and bade the excited woman be silent. But Thérèse wept and vehemently accused the countess.

"*N'accuses pas, ma belle sœur,*" replied Madame d'Épinay, "*Rousseau s'est tourné la tête, tout seul, sans être aidé de personne.*"

Soon, all the *salons* of Paris were amused with the tale of the "*passion malheureuse*" of *l'homme sauvage.*" There were several versions of it, more

or less heartrending. One of them reached the ears of the countess's lover, the Marquis de Saint-Lambert, the poet. He was then with his regiment in Germany, with the army of the Prince de Soubise. But Mars must yield to the call of Venus, and the warrior-poet delays not a post his return to Paris to fight the battle of his lady-love. Rousseau, with his usual baseness, had written anonymously to Saint-Lambert, in disparagement of the countess, who, probably, had amused herself with a little flirtation with her strange admirer. On the arrival of the incensed lover, Rousseau concealed himself; but, finding that reparation was seriously demanded, he, as was also his custom when treated with the contempt he so often merited for his slander and falsehood, humbly asked pardon, content to bear in moody silence any humiliations that were put upon him.

On this occasion he revenged himself by maligning his benefactress, Madame d'Épinay. Grimm denounced him in the *salons,* and he and the women — Thérèse and her vulgar mother — were compelled to quit the hermitage. But to be the talk of the *salons;* to occupy public attention, no matter whether creditably or otherwise, was to Jean Jacques as the breath of life. It helped also to spread the popularity of his Héloïse, and to increase his literary fame. The more eccentric he became, the more curiosity his book excited. After a short stay at an *auberge*, the Duc and

Duchesse de Luxembourg offered him a retreat in the ancient Château of Montmorency. Jean Jacques gladly accepted it, and there he wrote his "Émile." It was printed in Holland, the proofs being addressed, under cover, to the Directeur Général de la Librairie du Roi — M. de Malesherbes, whose duty it was to repress works believed to be of an objectionable character.

M. de Malesherbes, however, took a different view of his duties, though it may have been in accordance with that of the minister in power. For the "Encyclopédie Philosophique" being a second time suspended, at the instance of the dauphin, and an order issued to search the house where Diderot lived and to seize his papers, Malesherbes gave the Encyclopædist a day's notice of it, and told him to send them to his *bureau*, where there would, of course, be no suspicion of their being concealed. But the suspension was temporary only; the dauphin was powerless when M. de Choiseul and Madame de Pompadour thought fit to differ from his views and opinions.

When "Émile" appeared, it was voted a drowsy book. In "Émile" the ladies looked for another Saint-Preux. Few persons were tempted to wade through four volumes of impracticable suggestions on parental duties. But the dauphin appears to have been one of the few. He vehemently denounced "Émile" as "*un outrage jeté aux lois*

de la famille et de la société," and "Émile" had the honour of being publicly burnt on the Place de Grève. This made its success. Immediately all France was desirous of reading "Émile." Edition after edition was smuggled in from Holland, without satisfying the eager demand for it, and it was translated into several languages. It seems extraordinary that a work, harmless in its very extravagance, should have occasioned so great a commotion.

Other causes had long been acting on the public mind, and gradually producing throughout the nation that restlessness of feeling which culminated in the Revolution. Everything, therefore, that seemed to aim at pulling down the established order of things was sure of an enthusiastic reception, and especially from the class that hoped to profit most by the change. But it was to the Jesuits, who, through their patron, the dauphin, made such a stir in their condemnation of the book, that "Émile" mainly owed its popularity. They hoped to alarm by it the conscience of the king, whose signature to the decree for the expulsion of their Order from France was still delayed. He was terrified at his own temerity in this act. This they knew. A very slight matter might turn the scale in their favour. For Louis XV. inclined first to one side, then to the other, as the opposing parties prevailed in the struggle — the Jesuits, in their efforts to prevent their expulsion ;

the minister and the favourite, in their determination to accomplish it.

The education of youths of the higher classes of French society had long been in the hands of the Jesuits. Simultaneously with their expulsion, should such a system as that advocated by the author of "Émile" be introduced into the country, what incalculable evils might not the godless project be fraught with for France. "*Après nous le déluge*," replied the king — "let the dauphin see to that;" and, after a little further hesitation, he signed the decree. Had Louis XV. read "Émile"? He might have taken it up when his fits of *ennui* were strongest, and have extracted from it a few hearty laughs. Though prosy and didactical, yet "Émile" is amusing. Those who have not read it should get it at once; it is as enlivening as many a dull novel. A French writer has termed Jean Jacques's educational — or, rather, non-educational — system, as calculated to produce a nation of "*voleurs ou imbéciles*" — men fit for the pillory or idiot asylum. Happily, it is a system so utterly impracticable that it may, therefore, be laughed at.

Voltaire tried to read "Émile," but found it *trop ennuyant*. "Your mad-brained Jean Jacques," he wrote to M. Bardes, "has written but one good thing in his life — his 'Vicaire Savoyard.' *Comptez, que ce misérable qui a laissé mourir ses enfants à l'hôpital, malgré la pitié d'une personne*

qui voulait les sécourir, est un monstre d'orgueil, de bassesse et de contradictions." Voltaire was probably right.

"Le Contrat Social" appeared in the same year, 1762. It was said to be a translation or development of the doctrines of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century — a theory of government as impracticable as his theory of education.

The warrant once supposed to have been issued by the Parliament of Paris for the arrest of Jean Jacques, after the condemnation and burning of his "Émile," and which, when privately informed of, induced him to accept from the Duc de Vendôme the temporary shelter of the Temple, was but a practical joke of the Prince de Conti and the Marquis de Saint-Lambert. The Temple still preserved its privilege as a sanctuary, or place of refuge for debtors and others, against the pursuit of the Parliament; and it amused the prince, of whose acquaintance and professed friendship Rousseau was so vain, to immure him there, and frighten him with a prospect of a lodging in the Bastille. He affected to assist him to escape from France, and Jean Jacques and his womankind fled with all haste to Switzerland. He behaved there so arrogantly, and made himself so offensively conspicuous, that he was expelled the republic, and his books were burnt at Geneva.

Voltaire offered him an asylum. A friendly welcome, he said, awaited him, and that at Fernay

he might write and philosophize at his ease. Jean Jacques replied, "I do not love you, sir. You corrupt my republic with your plays." "Our friend Jean Jacques," said Voltaire, "is even more mad than I supposed." From Switzerland he went to Holland. A letter from Amsterdam, of June, 1762, says, "The arrogant Jean Jacques is here. But the Dutch take far more interest in a cargo of pepper than in him and his paradoxes." England was his next resting-place; but everywhere he fancied himself pursued and persecuted by a host of imaginary enemies. He was hospitably received by Hume, the historian, and created, by his eccentricities and "*incroyables gaucheries*," the sensation that was so gratifying to him. The particulars of his visit, and his disagreement with Hume, whose family did not reckon on receiving Thérèse into their circle, may be found in the writings of Hume, Horace Walpole, and other writers of the period. Space is wanting in these pages to follow him step by step.

Thérèse, as the result of her visit to England, became legally the wife of Rousseau at Amiens. She had threatened to leave him, declaring she could no longer bear the contempt and disdain which she everywhere met with. So Jean Jacques yielded to prejudice. In the course of the twenty years she had passed with him, Thérèse had acquired over Rousseau the kind of power that a nurse exercises over a child. They returned to

Paris under the assumed name of Renou. But no one interfered with him; he had fled from a shadow. He and Madame Jean Jacques lodged in the Rue de la Plâtrière. Professedly he was now a copier of music; and the ladies of the *beau monde* made this employment, in which he excelled, a pretext for peering into the arrangements of his little *ménage*.

Rousseau did not like the English before he had visited their country. He liked them still less afterwards. In "Émile," he speaks of the brutal character of the English. "*Ils se disent*," he says, "a good-natured people." No other nation, however, he imagines, "will ever agree with them in this good opinion of themselves." He attributes their brutality to a too great fondness for beef and mutton. Duclos, who had been reading "Émile," amused Madame de Pompadour by repeating the "*beau passage*," as he termed it, in which Rousseau renews the attacks of Pythagoras against the use of animal food. Seduced, he said, by his eloquence, and the great saving of expense it promised, he determined to try it.

He bought a pound of cherries for his dinner. Finding himself pretty well the next day, he dined on another pound. Resolved to persevere, though he began to feel a craving for a slice of beef or the wing of a fowl, he continued the same *régime* for nearly a week. Sunday arrived. It had been his custom to have his dinner sent in on that day

to his apartment, and he had given no orders to the contrary. "I had just swallowed a morsel of bread and some cherries," he said, "and drunk a glass of water, when my *rôtisseur* and his *garçon* made their appearance with soup, and broiled chicken, beef, and salad, with other et ceteras. '*Au diable Pythagore!*' I exclaimed. '*Entrez, entrez, Ragonneau, vous avez bien plus d'esprit que Rousseau.*' '*Rousseau!*' replied the man. '*Rousseau! Mon cher monsieur, c'est un brûle tout; un gâte-sauce; aussi vrai que je m'appelle Ragonneau.*'"

The Rousseau M. Ragonneau so disdained was a rival *rôtisseur*, of whose culinary reputation he was no less jealous than was Voltaire of the undeserved celebrity, as he considered, of Jean Jacques.

CHAPTER XIX.

Usage Humiliant. — An Empty Title. — Failing Health and Spirits. — A Wearying Part to Play. — The *quasi* Queen of France. — Manufactures Royales. — A Distinguished Artiste. — Insensibility of Louis XV. — "Was She About to Die?" — Death of Mdme. de Pompadour. — Engravings of Mdme. de Pompadour.

ARMIES destroyed; an exhausted treasury; ever-increasing difficulty in levying and collecting the taxes; lands lying waste, and murmuring and discontent everywhere rife, at last put an end to the war. At the close of the seventh campaign, the Duc de Nivernois was despatched to London with proposals of peace.

Apparently, Madame de Pompadour had not very closely examined the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle; for great was her indignation, after having perused the preliminary Treaty of Paris, handed to her by M. de Choiseul. "*Excellente Française*," she would have gone forth, sword in hand, as she said, and compelled the English and their king to respect France and her sovereign.

"Are not the stipulations of this *paix honteuse* sufficiently humiliating to France, that there

should be added to the loss of her colonies the further dishonour of George the Third's assumption of the title of her king?"

"Louis XIV. permitted it," replied M. de Choiseul.

"Incredible!" rejoined the incensed lady.

"Madame, it is mere ceremonial — *suivant l'ancien usage diplomatique.*"

"*Usage humiliant,* which must be tolerated no longer, unless to the sole title now left to Louis XV. of 'Most Christian King,' there be added King of England, in exchange for King of France, of which they have deprived him."

"Madame, his majesty is assured, as I would now assure you, that when circumstances are favourable, this formal ceremonial shall be abolished. At present they are not. We have now, unfortunately, to give consideration to things more important, and which affect far more deeply the honour and welfare of our country and our king."

The long retention by the English sovereigns of the empty title of King of France was certainly no less foolish than offensive. But the supposed pretensions of George III. did not excite in Louis XV. the same indignation as in Madame de Pompadour, when she discovered how "M. de Betfort" had dared to name his master in this treaty, and M. de Nivernois the *bassesse* to allow him, well knowing that the resources of France would still allow Louis XV. to appear in

the field to efface the stain cast upon himself and his people. And it is probable that a war for that purpose would have been a popular war, and Frenchmen have fought more desperately for an idea of that kind than to save Silesia for Marie Thérèse.

However, the treaty, with all its hard conditions, was signed in Paris on the 10th of February, 1763. On the 15th, Austria and Prussia concluded a separate treaty, signed at Hubertsburg; and the Seven Years' War was ended, Prussia, though Frederick retained Silesia, being more thoroughly exhausted by this contest than either France or Austria. Frederick II., in his "Mémoires," says of his kingdom, that its condition at this time could be represented only "*sous l'image d'un homme criblé de blessures; affaibli par la perte de son sang, et prêt à succomber.*" What a scourge to a nation is a "great" king!

Madame de Pompadour — disappointed in the objects for which, in the interests of Marie Thérèse, the war was undertaken; accused of having brought misery and distress on France, and occasioned the loss of her colonies — after the signing of the Peace, seemed to lose much of the energy of character and animation of spirit for which hitherto she had been so remarkable, and which had rarely failed of their cheering effect on the king. It was by an effort that she now took

her accustomed share in the *fêtes* and entertainments, and in the revelry that, notwithstanding the lamentable ending of the war, and the general outcry that France was ruined, all classes plunged into. Versailles, with its pestilent *grandes eaux*, had always more or less affected her health, and it was only by frequent change of air that she had been able to reside there at all.

For some years she had been regarded less as the *maîtresse-en-titre* of Louis XV. than as first minister of state, or even regent of the kingdom; for so little was seen of the king, he might almost as well have been absent. If he ever interfered in public affairs, it was but to create embarrassment; sometimes expressing his opinions in council, but leaving them to be adopted or rejected, as his ministers thought fit. It was to Madame de Pompadour he looked to enforce his views, when he had any. From her he received, in a form that amused him as chit-chat, a *résumé* of the business of state. Anything like dreary official routine had become abhorrent to him. Hers, too, was the task, when fits of *ennui* or weary-mindedness pressed very heavily on him, to devise a means of captivating his attention, and, by the force of brightness in her own mind, chasing the gloom from his.

But what a wearying part to play! What vitality of spirit, what inexhaustive fancy it demanded! What strength of will, too, to over-

come the repugnance that wearied nature must sometimes have opposed to this unflagging task of near twenty years' duration — a task whose aim was the exercise and retention of power, the wielding of a sceptre snatched from the grasp of a feeble king, the direction of the affairs of a nation, and subjugation of its ruler to her will. To prepare amusements, ever varying, for the king's entertainment in the evening, when his *petits soupers* were ended, and apathy began to steal over him, her mornings were passed with painters, singers, dancers, musicians, actors and actresses — professional people of every class. Her artistic imagination was ever inventing new pleasures and diversions "*pour empêcher ce roi fainéant de se rencontrer avec lui-même.*" Louis XV., in fact, when in his brightest moods, existed on a borrowed frame of mind, derived from the efforts of Madame de Pompadour to ward off his ever-recurring fits of gloom.

Besides this, the arrival of despatches, political or clerical intrigues, and public affairs generally, required her daily attendance in her Cabinet de travail. At any hour she might be summoned to grant interviews to the ministers of the various departments, to receive a foreign ambassador or secretary of state. Maréchals and generals, who owed their appointments to her, presented themselves to pay their respects to this *quasi* Queen of France, on joining the army, or returning from it.

Les hommes de robe of the rebellious parliaments laid their plaints before her more clearly and dispassionately than before the king; and the wealthy financiers, of whom the nearly bankrupt state borrowed money, arranged these transactions, in the first instance, with her.

All this was patent to the nation at large, and truly it placed the king before his subjects in a very contemptible light; but it does not give the right to heap opprobrium on Madame de Pompadour as the cause of all the vices of Louis XV., and of the misfortunes of France. She was the most talented and accomplished woman of her time; distinguished above all others for her enlightened patronage of science and of the arts; also for the encouragement she gave to the development of improvements in various manufactures, which had stood still, or were on the decline; until, favoured by her, a fresh impulse was given to further progress, and a perfection attained which has never since been surpassed, and, in fact, rarely equalled.

Les Gobelins, the carpets of the Savonnerie, the Porcelaine de Sèvres, were all, at her request, declared Manufactures royales. Some of the finest specimens of the products of Sèvres, in ornamental groups of figures, were modelled and painted by Madame de Pompadour as a present to the queen. Boucher, whose taste and fancy were well adapted for work of that kind, sketched many

a charming little picture for the principal pieces of Madame de Pompadour's table-service of Porcelaine de Sèvres. The name of Pompadour is, indeed, intimately associated with a whole school of art of the Louis Quinze period — art so inimitable in its grace and elegance that it has stood the test of time, and remains unsurpassed. Artists, and poets, and men of science, vied with each other in their admiration of her taste and talents. And it was not mere flattery, but simply the praise due to an enlightened patroness and a distinguished *artiste*.

"If," as says M. Bungener, "*on pouvait oublier à quel titre elle remplissait sa tache, on la trouverait grande et belle.*" But even as the king's *maîtresse-en-titre* — bearing in mind what were the manners and morals of *la haute société* — there was not a woman of rank in the court of Louis XV. who had the right to cast a stone at her. On the contrary, from that much-envied, though unenviable, position, which it was both her fault and her misfortune to have coveted, Madame de Pompadour, *simple bourgeoise*, might have looked down with disdain on those who bore the proudest names in the land. It was no ordinary woman who, in such a position, could for twenty years have maintained her ascendency over such a man as Louis XV., have borne sway undiminished in a court so intriguing and Jesuitical, and ruled with ever-increasing power and in-

fluence in the councils of such a kingdom as France.

Bodily fatigue and mental anxiety, acting on a naturally delicate constitution, threw her at last into a decline. Her spirits drooped. Yet, as long as possible, she smiled and was gay, to cheer her royal lover and conceal her sufferings from him. At times she had thoughts of leaving the court. "*Je pleure*," she wrote to the Marquise de Fontenailles, "*je pleure souvent sur l'ambition qui m'a amenée ici, et sur l' ambition qui m'y retient.*" She believed that the king would stoically support the news of her death, but would find her illness insupportable. He had shown so little emotion when his eldest daughter, Madame Royale, married to the Duke of Parma, had paid him a visit after some years of absence from France, and immediately after her arrival at Versailles took the small-pox, and died. The Duc de Bourgogne, eldest son of the dauphin, had, a year or two before, while at play, met with an accident that occasioned his death at the age of ten years. Louis was but slightly affected. There was the Duc de Berri to take his place, and there were two younger sons to take his, should aught befall him.

Unable to bear up against increasing weakness, Madame de Pompadour retired to Choisy. Her physician, Quesnay, thought it his duty to inform the king of her illness, and that it was of a nature that could hardly fail to bring her rapidly to the

grave. Louis was astonished. "To the grave?" he repeated, inquiringly. She, so brilliant, so *spirituelle;* whose light laughter and animating voice had so recently been the life and soul of his circle of *intimes,* and under whose spell darkness and gloom vanished, as by enchantment, from his own moody mind—was she about to die? He was incredulous. But with more anxiety than was looked for from him, he would not allow that she should remain at Choisy. She must be tenderly conveyed to Versailles, even should she die there. Tenderly, too, he received her, and with affectionate anxiety, apparently, watched the fluctuations of that deceptive malady, consumption.

The occasional gleams of hope became fewer and briefer, and on the morning of the 15th of April, 1764, Madame de Pompadour, then in her forty-second year, very tranquilly breathed her last. The priest who had been reading to her, perceiving, as he thought, that she was dozing, was about quietly to leave the room. Conscious of this, she opened her eyes, and inspired, doubtless, by some warning sensation that the final moment was at hand, said, "*Attendez, mon père, nous partirons ensemble.*" A quarter of an hour elapsed. The priest had then taken his departure, and the king, informed that his mistress was no more, was gazing fixedly upon her. Momentarily, it is said, he betrayed some emotion.

His attention to her in her last illness makes it

likely that he should have felt a pang of regret at her death — more likely far than that he made the remark attributed to him on the departure of her plain funeral procession from Versailles. Stepping out on the balcony to look at it, the weather being dark and cloudy at the time, *on dit* that he said, gaily, "*Madame, n'a pas de beau temps pour son voyage.*" She was buried by the side of her daughter in the chapel of the Convent of the Capucines, then in the Rue des Petits-Champs, but since destroyed. Madame de Pompadour left a very large fortune. Her hôtel, afterwards Elysée Bourbon, she bequeathed to the king, with a very fine collection of *pierres fines, gravées par Guay.* She left pensions to her physician, her intendant, and others. All persons connected with her household were provided for according to the positions they held in it, and very valuable *souvenirs* were given to many of her friends.

The bulk of her property was inherited by her brother, who, with the Prince de Soubise, to whom she bequeathed a diamond of great value, was her executor. She possessed the finest cabinet of medals in Europe, and her library, rich in rare MSS. and choice editions, was valued even then at upwards of a million of *francs.* The sale of her collection of antique furniture, and *objets d'art* of the rarest kind, lasted six months. A small edition of a series of sixty-three plates —

eaux fortes — engraved by herself, after *intagli* by Guay, was printed for presents to friends, who eagerly sought a *souvenir* of a woman remarkable in her life, and whose career forms a portion of history.

CHAPTER XX.

"Ah! Pauvre Duchesse!" — Mdlle. d'Espinasse. — Singulièrement Aimante. — A Tale of Sentimental Love. — "Behold Your Queen!" — A Horrid Thing to Have Nerves. — L'Écrivain, Grand Seigneur. — L'Abbé Maury's First Sermon. — Madame Doublet de Persan. — Distraction for the Dauphin. — Death of the Dauphin. — M. Thomas's Éloge of the Dauphin. — Piron's Tribute of Laudation. — Death of King Stanislaus. — Bossuet Parodied.

WHAT great question is this that so agitates the court of Louis XV., that interests both the queen and the princesses? Even the dauphin is anxious for its solution — the course of philosophism and Jesuitism being likely, for good or for evil, to be influenced by it. It is discussed with much eagerness in the *salons*. Attention is absorbed by it, and no other subject is listened to. Will it occasion a further expansion of the *panier*, or bring more generally into favour the diminished amplitude of the *considération?* Will *les coiffures* rise a foot higher, or descend in the same proportion?

Then, mysterious hints, nods, and glances, with which artful womankind often veils her own views,

are employed by many an ambitious fair dame, to indicate that an intimate acquaintance, or bosom friend, actually hopes for a successful result to her persistent efforts to take up the fallen sceptre of the late duchess.

"*Pauvre duchesse!*" sighs Mdlle. d'Espinasse, who is reclining on a *canapé* in the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin. Every five minutes or so she does a stitch or two of embroidery, and in the intervals glances at a book which lies open beside her, and which is Sterne's "Sentimental Journey." This lady is the *amie intime* of the philosopher d'Alembert, in whose *salon* she presides; also at his weekly Encyclopædical dinners. She is herself a philosopher, very learned, and shares with d'Alembert and Diderot the *rédaction* of that wonderful work of the eighteenth century, "L'Encyclopédie Philosophique." For some two or three years past, twice a week, she has kept Madame Geoffrin in countenance at her dinners to the *gens de lettres* and *gens du monde*. She is the only lady invited on these occasions. Madame Geoffrin had observed, she said, that a number of ladies at a dinner-party was very distracting to the gentlemen. Conversation, instead of being general, became broken, scattered, fragmentary, and wearisome. She was fond of unity herself, and she found that her guests were also.

Madame Geoffrin, therefore, took the centre of her dinner-table, and opposite to her placed her

charming friend, Mdlle. d'Espinasse. Both these ladies had a wonderful talent for leading and sustaining conversation. They played into each other's hands, and kept the flow of soul equably flowing: not impetuously, to interfere with the enjoyment of the good cheer Madame Geoffrin set before her friends; but just enough to incite that pleasant state of feeling that allows good digestion to wait on appetite. She had no objection to the presence of ladies at the *petits soupers* after her reception. Then they were welcome guests — always, of course, *femmes d'esprit et la fleur du grand monde*.

Mdlle. d'Espinasse was reputed of noble birth. But her escutcheon bore a bar sinister, like that of her friend d'Alembert. She had, however, been very well educated, and was brought from Burgundy by Madame du Deffant, when first threatened with blindness, to reside with her as *dame de compagnie*. She was then just twenty. The philosophers and other frequenters of the *salon* very soon made it clear to the "*aveugle clairvoyante*," as Voltaire called the marquise, that they preferred the conversation of the younger lady to hers. Mdlle. d'Espinasse had no beauty of face. She was remarkably plain, and much marked with the small-pox — a common disfigurement at that time — but she had very fine eyes and beautiful hair. She was tall and of an elegant figure, and dressed with excellent taste. Her voice was pleasing. She possessed a wonderfully winning

tongue, and as La Harpe and other admirers said, and a voluminous collection of love letters attest, "*une âme singulièrement aimante*," for eventually she died of love and grief for a lover's death, and left a group of lovers, distracted with love, to lament her loss.

She had been ten years with Madame du Deffant, when it appeared that Walpole was becoming enchanted also. The old marquise could not tolerate that. *Désagréments*, not to say quarrels, ensued; when d'Alembert, being as madly in love as a philosopher well could be, carried off Mdlle. d'Espinasse, and gave her a *salon* to preside in. Through the interest of the philosophical minister, Choiseul, he obtained for her a pension from the king's privy purse, her claim to it, probably, being her "*âme singulièrement aimante;*" for in her quality of sub-editor of the Encyclopædia, and d'Alembert's aide-de-camp, she could hardly excite much interest in the king.

But to return to the *canapé*, where we left the lady with her favourite author, pining away, sentimentally in love with two or three philosophers and as many *beaux cavaliers*, each one convinced that it is he who reigns supreme in the gentle damsel's heart, and he alone who inspires those eloquently passionate *billets-doux*, in which to each and all she pours forth the tender tale of her heart's woes. Once more Mdlle. d'Espinasse sighs forth "*Pauvre duchesse!*" for Madame de Pompa-

dour is still the theme of the scandal-mongers of the *salon.*

"Why '*pauvre duchesse?*'" inquires, rather brusquely, a friend who sits near her. "Why should you pity her? Very recently I saw her dance, or I should say perform, the 'Menuet de la Cour,' with the most grandly impertinent air in the world. Clairon's ridiculous '*grande révérence,*' which we hear so much of, is not to be compared, for pretentious dignity, with Madame de Pompadour's curtsey. It was a curtsey, certainly; but invested with an air that seemed to say to all present, 'Behold your queen!'"

"Marmontel," began Mdlle. d'Espinasse, apologetically ——

"Marmontel," interrupts this chatterer of the *salon,* "sings her praises, I know — she appointed him Historiographe de France. Now dry your eyes, Mademoiselle; your *pauvre duchesse* was but *une petite bourgeoise,* who had caught a certain air of the court. What is Marmontel but *un bourgeois?* He is the friend, too, of that brother, the disdainful Marigny, now richer than the king; in fact, as rich as a Jew, and going to marry a Mdlle. Filleul, a cousin, or friend, or sister-in-law, or something of that kind, of Marmontel's — *une bourgeoise,* of course. He dared not condescend to such a marriage as that — condescend, you know — while his sister, the *pauvre duchesse,* was living. I hear that the king is really concerned

at her death, though he affected gaiety and *nonchalance* for a day or two. Her apartments are closely shut up, by his order, and he proposes never to reopen them — but time will show. To keep up his spirits he has doubled his usual daily dose of champagne, and Richelieu spends his mornings in comforting him."

"The old duke will comfort him, if anybody can. He says the king told him — Richelieu keeps no secrets, you know — that 'although he had sometimes felt that Madame de Pompadour's opinions had more weight in the councils of France than his own, yet her fondness for power of that kind was so intense, that to deprive her of it would have been her death. She had statesmanlike qualities, he said, and he had more confidence in her than in his ministers.' But this and much more must be known to you, Mademoiselle. You philosophers know everything. Ah! I perceive you are again in tears. You suffer from nerves, I believe, like the rest of us. It is a horrid thing to have nerves, is it not? Dear me! what will d'Alembert say if he perceives that I have unconsciously made you weep? or le Comte ——"

"Ah! madame, I beg of you ——"

"Well, I will not breathe his name. You are far too sensitive, *ma chère*. M. de Buffon is here this evening, I see—as usual, *en grande tenue;* and, as usual, in his favourite arm-chair, reposing on his cane, with his eyes on the ceiling, a benignant

smile on his face, and his thoughts up in the clouds, in pursuit of a *jolie tournure* for an unsettled phrase now coursing rebelliously through his brain. That horrid Jean Jacques, you know, when he visited Montbard, Buffon being absent, fell on his knees and kissed the door-step of his *cabinet d'étude*. He imagined him '*l'homme de la nature*' in the same sense as himself, when they are far as the poles asunder. Look for a moment on le Comte de Buffon, the type of the '*écrivain, grand seigneur.*' Look at his *jabot* and ruffles of fine point lace, his embroidered vest, silk stockings, gold shoe-buckles, *chapeau à tricorne* and gold-headed cane. Then fancy Jean Jacques, in his slatternly robe and caftan, tramping about Paris, with all the *polissons* of the capital at his heels, and thinking it fame. For my part, I love him not."

"There are Buffon and Diderot side by side. Ah! *quel contraste frappant!* Would not you say that Buffon had just left the court, and Diderot the *cabaret?*"

"Diderot is a great man," replies Mdlle. d'Espinasse, with as severe an air as she can assume.

"According to Voltaire — yes; but are you aware that the *grossièretés* he calls criticisms have just killed poor Carle Vanloo, and that with less judgment than spite he decries the really pleasing pictures of Carle's nephew, Michel Vanloo? Boucher has now Vanloo's post of 'Premier pein-

tre du roi' — a new grief for Diderot.* *Bon soir, ma chère,* I perceive M. le Comte gazing at me imploringly. I mercifully give up my seat to him. Ah! yet another moment. Have you heard of the sermon last night, *chez* Madame du Deffant?"

"A sermon! No, madame."

"As you know, she affects to keep up in her *salon,* as far as this degenerate age permits, the long-ago forgotten traditions of the once-famed Hôtel de Rambouillet. You remember, no doubt, the incident of young Bossuet preaching there his first sermon, extemporized at ten minutes' notice, to an assembly of *grandes dames* and their *galants hommes.* Well, the poor old blind marquise revived this scene last night in her *salon,* for the edification of the *belles dames* and their *amis intimes* there assembled, the hero of it being a young *abbé* of nineteen, recently arrived in Paris, and caught for the occasion by Pont de Veyle. Wonderful lungs, and already *bon philosophe,* I hear; his name, I believe, Maury. Again, *bon soir* — d'Alembert will tell you more about it — M. de Guibert, I see, grows impatient."

All the court news gleaned at Versailles, all the chit-chat and gossip of the capital, served for conversation, comment, and amplification, in the Parisian *salons* in the evening. In the *salon* of Madame

* Boucher died in 1770 suddenly — brush in hand, and alone in his satin-draped *boudoir-atelier* — before a picture he was painting of "Vénus à sa Toilette."

Doublet de Persan, who for forty years inhabited an "*appartement exterieur*" of the Convent of Les Filles de St. Thomas, two registers were always lying open for contributions of news that her visitors might have gathered in Paris, or elsewhere, in the course of the day. One register was labelled "doubtful *on dits;*" the other, "trustworthy information." Under the direction of Petit de Bachaumont, the scraps of news were arranged under different heads, and copied in a legible hand. These manuscript sheets of "Nouvelles à la Main" were then despatched per post to the provinces, and, distributed by Madame's servants, had an extensive sale in Paris. It was from materials thus obtained that Bachaumont wrote his "Mémoires Secrets." His friend, Madame Doublet, lived to nearly a century, and died at last in the convent. Her news-letters circulated in France for near forty years, and her *salon* was frequented by many persons of celebrity and of extreme opinions. But it was not a fashionable *salon* or *réunion* of the *beau monde*. The lieutenant of police usually kept a watchful eye on it, for, though no gambler, *intrigante*, or philosopher herself, her doors were hospitably open to all of them.

But at this time news was scarce, and, except for the question, "Who shall succeed her?" the court was dull. The king was gloomy, and little was seen or known of him. The dauphin, whose

health was never robust, had taken so deeply to heart the dissolution in France of the Society of Jesus, that it was reported he was falling into a decline. He had experienced another vexation in the greater alienation that now existed between him and his father, besides continued deep grief for the loss of his eldest son. A camp was then forming at Compiègne, and the king at last consented to allow him to gratify his military tastes, and to seek distraction in superintending the new manœuvres about to be introduced into the French army. Emancipated from the restraint he had so long endured, and which at his age (thirty-six) must have been extremely trying, he entered on his new duties and occupations with so much zeal that his weak constitution gave way under the unusual fatigues imposed on it. He returned to Versailles at the end of the autumn, worn and weary, and, after languishing for a few weeks, died on the 20th of December, 1765.

From one end of France to the other the pulpits resounded with the praises of the dauphin. He had rather prematurely announced his intention of pursuing with extremest rigour the enemies of religion and of the throne — when he should sit on it. He was, therefore, the hope of the Jesuits. And the clergy generally were anxious at his death to raise him to the honour of saintship. In exalting so greatly the virtues of the son, they condemned the vices of the king. Louis XV. felt

this; but its only effect was to increase his dislike to that son, whose death, as he told Choiseul, affected him but little, though, for form's sake, he thought it right to remain for awhile in seclusion.

The saint of the Jesuits seemed likely to become the saint of their enemies, the philosophers. M. Thomas, the academician, in his *éloge* of the dauphin, spoke of him in terms so exaggerated, that the philosophic brotherhood accused him of having "*un peu démasqué les batteries.*" "If the prince," said Diderot, "really merited a hundredth part of the praise M. Thomas has lavished upon him, who in this world ever resembled, or could hope to resemble, him? But can any one approve such a mass of hyperbole, of which the falsehood is so strikingly evident? What sort of opinion must the father, who well knew his son's faults, form of men of letters, when one of the honestest among them can without shame make up his mind to stand forth and lie to a whole nation? His sisters, too? And his wife? As for his *valets*, they will but laugh at it."

Grimm, as characteristically, but with less vehemence, remarked, "If, in good faith, M. Thomas believes that the dauphin possessed a fourth of the qualities he has ascribed to him, it is very certain that he is no descendant of Thomas the apostle." By degrees, the prince — whose character the king described as more Polish

than French — was idealized by the philosophers, until they had made him one of themselves. The books he openly denounced were declared to have been, in secret, his constant companions and his most diligent study. Locke "On Human Understanding," of which, in translation, he and the Jesuits had been strenuously active in preventing the circulation in France, was never out of his hands, they said, in the privacy of his study, and was dearer to him than his *livre d'heures*, generally supposed to have been dearest of all. Even Piron took up his pen to laud the dauphin. But it was not the pen of the Piron of former days. Following the fashion of the *belles dames* of his time, Piron had forsaken the sins of his youth, and in his latter years was grown devout. Instead of seeking for Piron, as of old, in the *cabarets*, those who now wanted him sought the old sinner in the churches. His tribute of laudation to the dauphin took the form of sacred poetry, in which, naturally, no low jest was allowed to intrude. He imagined the prince in heaven, and put into his mouth a magnificently pious and lugubrious tirade. But what was Piron without his scurrility and his licentious wit? "If the dauphin in Paradise was occupied in making and reciting such poetry as that," it was remarked, "he would surely have the *pas* over M. de Voltaire."

On the 23rd of February, 1766, two months

after the death of her son, poor Marie Leczinska lost her father, King Stanislaus. He was eighty-eight years of age, but the circumstances of his death made it more affecting. Alone in his dressing-room, and seated near the hearth on which some large logs of wood were burning, his *robe-de-chambre* took fire. He was infirm, unable to aid himself, and his cries for assistance were not immediately heard. When his servant returned to him, he found the old king, who had made great efforts to extinguish the flames, lying on the floor, his hands and legs very much burnt. The pain of his wounds produced fever, and he died after lingering a few days in agony. Stanislaus was greatly beloved in Lorraine. It had become a custom with many of the *noblesse* of the French court, and other wealthy persons, to make frequent visits to his little capital, which he had taken so much pride in embellishing. His loss was therefore felt at Versailles, far beyond the intimate circle of the queen.

The funeral discourse delivered on that occasion, by the Père Élisée, momentarily turned a distressing catastrophe into a subject for mirth. Thinking, probably, to produce an effect similar to that caused by Bossuet, when he began the celebrated oration on the death of Madame Henriette d'Angleterre — "*O nuit désastreuse! ô nuit effroyable! où retentit tout à coup comme un éclat de tonnerre cette étonnante nouvelle! Madame se*

meurt! Madame est morte!" the Père Élisée began. "*O jour! ô moment affreux! où nous entendimes retentir autour de nous de longs sanglots entrecoupés de cette triste parole. Le feu a pris aux vêtements du roi! sa vie est dans le plus grand danger! le roi est dangereusement malade!*" — a ridiculous parody, that provoked subdued laughter. As observed by Boulogne, to make it still more perfect, he should have said, "*Le roi se brûle; le roi est brûlé.*"

Death was very busy at that time in the family of Louis XV. In March, 1767, the dauphine died, to the extreme grief of the queen, who lost in her almost her only companion and friend. Her daughters were restless, and dissatisfied with their position — ill brought up in the convent of Fontevrault, and their education neglected. In the following year, the queen also died. Her malady, apparently, was a deep and settled grief, a gradual pining away. On the 24th of June, 1768, it terminated in death, for which, motionless, speechless, she had lain for weeks anxiously, as it seemed, longing for, and awaiting.

CHAPTER XXI.

Birth of Napoleon Buonaparte. — "Forming" a Queen of France. — The Empress, Marie Thérèse. — Madame d'Esparbés Unmasked. — Rival Intrigantes. — Noble Hopes O'erthrown. — Retribution Exacted. — Installing the Favourite. — A Favourite's Privileges. — Enter La Comtesse du Barry. — The Coiffeur in a Difficulty. — "La Belle Bourbonnaise."

IT had been generally expected that, at the death of Madame de Pompadour, the favour which M. de Choiseul had for six years enjoyed with the king would come to an end, and, in the natural course of things, the reign of a new favourite usher in a new ministry. Four years had now passed away. The apartments of Madame de Pompadour yet remained closed, and the Ministère Choiseul, more compact than any, perhaps, that had hitherto held power in France, was still supreme.

M. de Choiseul's unfailing flow of spirits, his wonderful self-confidence, the tact with which he managed the king — relieving him of all anxiety, and setting things before him in a pleasant and satisfactory light — had obtained him so much influence that, although surrounded by enemies, watching eagerly for his downfall, M. de Choiseul

was master of France, or, as it was customary to say, "*Il possédait le roi.*" As a minister he has been considered more brilliant than able, endowed with many agreeable qualities which, as a man of the world, made him popular in society, but deficient in the more solid ones that should characterize a statesman. One of the later acts of his ministry was the successful arrangement of the union of Corsica to France, after much opposition in the island, and the hopeless struggle of the brave Paoli for freedom. On the 15th of August, 1768, this union was proclaimed, and on its first anniversary was born the man who, it may be said, was destined to unite France to Corsica — Napoleon Buonaparte.

After the death of the queen, Choiseul was anxious that Louis XV. should marry an Austrian archduchess. Mesdames, the king's daughters, were desirous of fixing his attention on the young Duchesse de Lamballe, the widowed daughter-in-law of the Duc de Penthièvre. This would have been a marriage *à main gauche;* but the king did not incline to either proposal. He declared also that he was not disposed to follow the example of his predecessor. To ensure his continuance in power in the event of a change of rulers, the duke obtained the king's consent to negotiate with M. de Kaunitz the marriage of the dauphin, the Duc de Berri, with the Archduchess Marie Antoinette, the youngest daughter of the empress-queen. Both

Kaunitz and Choiseul claimed for themselves the highest political merit for thus powerfully cementing, as they imagined, the union between the two crowns and countries.

The dauphin was then little more than thirteen years of age, and Marie Antoinette twelve. The young archduchess was born on an ill-omened day, the 2nd of November, 1755 — that fatal All-Souls' Day when Lisbon, with 30,000 of the people, was destroyed by the great earthquake, an event which struck terror into the hearts of the inhabitants of every city in Europe. When the marriage was arranged, the actors Aufresne and Sainton, and the Abbé de Vermond, were engaged to form the giddy young girl, whose education had been entirely neglected, to play her part, as future queen, at the court of France. Marie Thérèse sacrificed the happiness of all her daughters to her ambitious political views, and, very cruelly, the lives of two of them to her miserable, narrow-minded bigotry and perverted piety. The devout empress — magnified into a heroine on the strength of the well-known idealized scene that drew from Hungarian gallantry the cry of "Moriamur pro rege nostro, Maria Theresia" — when it served her purposes, could be more than complaisant to the mistresses of Louis XV., and instruct her young daughter to adopt the same course, looking forward too confidently to the continued support of Choiseul.

The Baron de Besenval says of his intimate friend, the Duc de Choiseul, that he was "prone to the *faiblesse* — the worst that a man officially employed can have — of yielding too readily to female influence." He could be swayed by the whims of his charming little philosophical duchess, as well as by those of other *femmes d'esprit.* His sister, the Duchesse de Grammont, had considerable power over him, and it was through her that the Ministère Choiseul, which had so long triumphantly defied all attacks upon it, was finally overthrown. The duchess had set her heart on succeeding to the vacant throne of Madame de Pompadour. The duke had warded off all other aspirants, and had effectually destroyed the hopes of Madame d'Esparbés, who thought to win the favour of the king by displaying for his admiration her very beautiful hands, when plucking the stalks from some cherries.

The tribute of admiration was duly paid to the pretty fingers, and to the grace with which they performed their work. Thus encouraged, she continued persistently to pay her *devoirs* to her gracious sovereign, who, as Madame de Genlis informs us — in her account of her presentation at about this time — was still remarkably handsome, and of noble presence, though other reports are less enthusiastic. But it did not suit Choiseul to admit Madame d'Esparbés to share the government with him; so, notwithstanding his gallantry,

he put an end to her schemes by unmasking her, as it were, before the *beau monde* at Marly, where the king more frequently sojourned than before the death of Madame de Pompadour. As the duke and several ladies and gentlemen of the court were descending the grand staircase, he tapped Madame d'Esparbés familiarly under the chin, and said aloud, and in a manner understood by all, "*Petite, comment vont vos affaires?*" This *persiflage*, which amused all but the lady herself, he repeated to the king, who was so shocked at her audacious design of making a conquest of him, that a *lettre-de-cachet* was immediately issued, and Madame d'Esparbés — informed that she was released from the duty of paying court to his majesty — was ordered to retire to Montauban, the estate of her father, the Marquis de Lussac.

Madame de Grammont attacked the king more insidiously. Louis XV., to a certain extent, had respected the grief of the queen under the family bereavements she had sustained — if but little affected by them himself. In her long illness he seemed concerned and anxious, and visited her often; so far evincing more decency of feeling, and more regard for her, than those *grandes dames* of her court, who were intriguing against each other to obtain the post of *maîtresse-en-titre*, which — not desiring, one may venture to hope, further to distress the queen — he was in no haste to fill up while she lived. They had now no fear

of *une petite bourgeoise* being again so highly exalted. Choiseul would oppose that, they felt sure; while, further to avert so great a calamity, the highest ladies in the land were patriotically willing to sacrifice themselves to save the honour of France and her king.

The attentions of the duchess were received by Louis with very marked coldness, which, however, chilled not her ardent ambition to become his "guide, philosopher, and friend." "*Par l'obstination et l'audace*," and "a certain fascinating power of domination," which she gave herself credit for possessing, she yet hoped that her praiseworthy efforts would prevail. What, then, was the consternation of this noble lady, and that of all the Roman matrons of the court, when the duke announced to the *esprits forts* of Madame de Grammont's atheistical *salon*, the re-opening of Madame de Pompadour's apartments! Five years had nearly elapsed since a key had been turned in the locks, or the shutters been opened. The rich gilding was found tarnished, and damp and moth had been destructively busy with the heavy velvet draperies, etc. Costly new furniture is ordered, and the apartments are to be splendidly decorated without delay.

But this is not for Madame de Grammont. Most persons present are aware of that, and their furtive glances seem to inquire how she bears it; for they are also aware of her pretensions. But

a few days since the king had told her — perhaps with charitable intention of giving her credit for scruples she had not, though she interpreted it differently — that "he would have no Dame de Maintenon in his court."

What he needed, he said, was "*un salon pour souper et se réunir un petit comité d'intimes sous le sceptre d'une femme gracieuse; et depuis Madame de Pompadour il ne l'avait pas retrouvé encore.*" This phœnix, it appears, is found. The duchess discerns plainly the hand of Richelieu in this secret intrigue. Jealousy and intense hate possess her mind, and she demands of her brother more than his accustomed *persiflage*, or mere hostility to this mistress expectant. The death-blow to her hopes must be avenged. Her outraged feelings exact severe retribution.

Forthwith, an infamous parentage, a life of deepest depravity, low habits, and even worse than coarse language, are ascribed to this new mistress of Louis XV.; *maîtresse-en-titre* she is not yet. Her presentation, according to the etiquette established and observed by the *Grand Monarque* himself, has not yet taken place; and if Madame de Grammont, aided by a band of pamphleteers and song writers, can brand her with infamy, it will not. *Chansons et pont-neufs* and scandalous *histoirettes* are sung and said and fiddled in every corner of Paris. Crowds gather round to hear them; to mock and laugh, and to

hiss the name of their Well-beloved. What is called the "story of her life" is circulated, sold, or given away, just as it happens, in all the most frequented streets and places of public resort. It was on such a foundation as this — the baseness of a high-born dame, disappointed in her hopes of being the mistress of a worn-out libertine king — that the ill-fame of Madame du Barry long rested.

It was surely dishonour enough that a young and beautiful woman, though not of the privileged class, should fill so disgraceful a position. But the *grandes dames* saw in it only usurpation of an exalted post created for the daughters of illustrious houses.

The day appointed for the installation of the favourite arrived. (The commands of "Louis le Grand" were very precise concerning this ceremony.) She is to be presented to Mesdames, the queen being dead, and her position at court recognized by them. Henceforth, she is entitled to recommend to ministers the persons she favours as applicants for office. And her recommendation is to be received as a royal command. She is entitled to expect visits of etiquette from the grandees of the court, and foreign ambassadors; to accompany the king on his numerous journeys from palace to palace; to visit all branches of the royal family; in short, to have all the privileges and honours of a queen. Without the presentation she could claim no such distinction; with it

she is the first lady in the land. She has France at her feet; and if, like Madame de Pompadour, she has tact, she cannot be expelled from the dignified post to which his majesty has raised her.

The hour appointed for the presentation of Madame du Barry by the Duchesse de Mirepoix had passed, and there were no signs yet of her arrival. The king has been accustomed to punctuality, and shows some signs of impatience. If Mesdames dared say what they thought, it would be nothing favourable to this "impertinent *grisette* who has bewitched the king" — as those who know her only from Madame de Grammont's songs and sonnets are accustomed to call her. *Grands seigneurs* and *grandes dames* exchange very meaning glances. They expect this creature to come rushing in, and, in her low *patois*, and her ignorance of *les convenances*, horrify the august circle with an account of some vulgar cause of delay. The old Duc de Richelieu, the Comte d'Aiguillon, and others of their party, begin to look serious and to wonder what will be the result of this contretemps. It is, of course, by an intrigue of those who desire Choiseul's office that the young girl, whose appearance is now by all present so anxiously awaited, has been introduced to the king — their intention being to employ her influence to further their own views.

The king, in no excellent humour, is about to postpone the ceremony, when Richelieu, who had

withdrawn to ascertain why and wherefore this noble company should be kept so long in suspense, returns, and informs his majesty that Madame du Barry is there, but having, unfortunately, arrived so late, she would not enter without permission. His majesty permits. The doors fly open. Enter the grand usher. Numerous attendants. Then the Duchesse de Mirepoix, and by her side, her train borne by a royal page, a vision of youth, beauty, grace, and modesty — the Comtesse du Barry. She is tall, her figure elegant and sylph-like, her complexion brilliantly fair, with a pale rose bloom on her cheek. And it is not rouge, which, with excellent taste, she never made use of. Her eyes are of a deep violet blue, and she has wavy light-brown hair.*

She was twenty-three, but appeared much younger. Her modesty and graceful manners particularly struck the courtiers, also the elegant simplicity of her dress; and it was said by one present that, instead of the king's mistress, and such a mistress as they had looked for, she might have been taken for "*une petite pensionnaire qui venait de faire sa première communion.*" The delay in her arrival was owing to the difficulty the *coiffeur* experienced in getting her rebelliously

* Some accounts speak of her "fine dark eyes and rich southern complexion." But Madame Vigée Le Brun, who painted her portrait, should be good authority, and she describes Madame du Barry as above.

curly hair dressed up to the proper height, and her torture under the operation. The Duchesse de Grammont, who had passed her *quarantaine*, was infinitely annoyed by the denial — in appearance, at least — so forcibly given to her infamous reports. Her rage was not easily appeased, and the next morning the ears of the young countess were assailed by the disgraceful song, "La Belle Bourbonnaise," sung under her windows.

Madame du Barry was *de son siècle*, no doubt, as was Madame de Grammont herself. But there is no proof, beyond the infamous *chansons* and *histoirettes* circulated by the duchess and the people she employed, that Madame du Barry was the degraded creature she has been described on this more than doubtful authority. She was extravagant, thoughtless, and believed that the riches of the king were boundless. But her kindness of heart, her thoughtful care of the poor and sick on her estate of Luviciennes, where she was greatly beloved, and her desire to aid Louis XVI. and his queen in their affliction, plead strongly in her favour. The devotion, too, of such a man as the Duc de Cosse-Brissac could hardly have continued for ten years, undiminished, to a woman vulgar and depraved; and, lastly, her death, by the guillotine of the monsters of the Terror, should excuse and expiate many a fault.

Madame du Barry

CHAPTER XXII.

The Dauphin and His Brothers. — Arrival of the Bride. — A Timid Young Bridegroom. — Les Fêtes Magiques. — Fête of the Ville de Paris. — A Terrible Catastrophe. — "Lamentation, Mourning, and Woe." — Marie Antoinette.

T is the 14th of April, 1770. The Château de Compiègne is filled with guests — a brilliant assemblage of the *haute noblesse* composing the court of Louis XV. The king, with his three young grandsons — the dauphin, the Comte de Provence (afterwards Louis XVIII.), and the Comte d'Artois (Charles X.) — arrived at the château on the evening of the 13th, to receive the Austrian Archduchess Marie Antoinette Jeanne Josèphe de Lorraine, the betrothed of the dauphin. The bridegroom elect, a stout, heavy-looking, melancholy boy, wears an air of resigned indifference to his fate that reminds one of his grandfather, when, at the same age, fifteen and a half, his cousin de Bourbon, with his mistress, Madame du Prie, married him to Marie Leczinska.

Of the younger brothers, Monsieur (the Comte de Provence) is as thick and ungainly in figure as the dauphin. But there is more expression in his countenance — perhaps he is more intellectual,

and possibly a little more *rusé*. The Comte d'Artois is rather slimly formed, and report credits him with having inherited in a greater degree than either of his brothers the impetuous, chivalrous, restless, yet tyrannical temperament of the Poles, of which his father exhibited so large a dash in his character. But they are still mere children, and their dispositions and mental faculties but partially developed. The marriages of both these poor boys are, however, arranged to two little sister princesses of Savoy.

A crowd surrounds the château, and anxious groups are assembled at every town and village along the line of road the young princess is to pass. In so terribly break-neck a state were these roads that, in case of a mishap to the *cortége* of the royal bride, they have been thoroughly repaired for the especial occasion of her journey. The *avant-couriers* arrive. There is a grand *fanfare;* the king and the dauphin mount their horses, and, with a numerous retinue, ride forth to meet and welcome the future queen of France. Notwithstanding his sixty years, Louis XV. makes a far more gallant knight than the dauphin, who would much prefer to be employed with his last new plaything — a blacksmith's anvil — than in playing the lover to any young lady.

The old state travelling carriage is in sight. Putting spurs to his horse, the king leads the way, and, with his plumed hat in his hand, rides

up to the side of the cumbrous vehicle. A lively looking girl of fourteen and a half years, fresh and fair, but with no beauty of feature or even of figure at that time, returns the king's greeting. Her manner betrays that she has been drilled into the necessity of being very dignified. But something of the hoyden is evident in the inclination, with difficulty restrained — though the solemn eyes of l'Abbé de Vermond are upon her — to burst into laughter at the part she is playing in this formal scene. Like the "consecration of the Sultana," to quote the expression of a French writer, it is conducted according to the rules of etiquette prescribed and observed a hundred and ten years before by the great Louis XIV. at the reception of his *fiancée*, Maria Theresa of Spain.

The bridegroom on the present occasion is, however, far more like the boy king, Louis XIII., when, being desperately out of temper and naturally frigid, he was obliged to show himself to the *bons bourgeois de Paris* by the side of his sparkling, coquettish young bride, Anne of Austria. The lively imagination of the present little archduchess had pictured to itself a far more dashing young husband than the gloomy, timid, fat dauphin. He speaks not a word to her. She glances curiously at him now and then, and generally meets the eyes of the youthful Comte d'Artois. Both of them smile, for there is more sympathy between this boy and her than the others. It

was remarked at the time that it was a pity they had not been destined for each other; but it was a still greater pity, as subsequent events too well proved, that the marriages of such children should have taken place at all.

The civil part of the ceremony of the fatal marriage of Marie Antoinette and the dauphin was performed on the 15th, and on the following day the nuptial benediction was given at Versailles by the Archbishop of Paris. A series of *fêtes* followed. And notwithstanding that the exchequer was in its customary chronic state of exhaustion, twenty millions of *francs* — an almost fabulous sum for that period — were expended upon them. "*Fêtes magiques*," they were termed, from their surpassing in splendour anything then remembered, or, owing to the greater facilities available, than had probably ever been seen in France. Visitors, noble and royal, flocked from every part of Europe to witness them; while in the provinces many persons who, in those non-travelling days, had never made the journey to Paris, took this favourable opportunity of seeing the reported splendour of their capital. These marriage *fêtes* formed an event in the lives of many people — an event deeply impressed on their minds by the terrible catastrophe that terminated them, and which, in after years, was again brought vividly before them by the tragic death, on the same spot, of the ill-starred pair whom all classes

in France were now vying with each other to honour.

Never, perhaps, was more luxury and extravagance openly displayed in Paris by the court, the *noblesse*, the rich *bourgeoisie*, and by many who were not at all rich; or more indignation expressed by those who looked on, unable or unwilling to join in the reckless pursuit of pleasure — so prophetic of evil — then frantically whirling around them. Foreign visitors caught this infection of folly, and sought to outrival the Parisians in splendid entertainments, in celebration of the inauspicious event, in the richness of their equipages, and expensiveness of *toilette*.

The public rejoicings had continued for six weeks uninterruptedly. On the 30th of May they were to close with the *fête* of the Ville de Paris, a banquet and ball, illuminations and fireworks at night on the Place Louis XV. (now Place de la Concorde), that were to surpass all that had preceded them. Thousands of people assembled in the Place. It was then in course of construction, and with the Rue Royale, also incomplete, surrounded by a scaffolding or hoarding of wood, that closed the openings, except at one corner, and was made to serve as a stand, or support, for the set pieces. Most unfortunately, through some mismanagement, this hoarding took fire, and burnt rapidly. No means were at hand for extinguishing the flames, and there being but one

egress for the mass of people that filled this spacious square, instantly, with eager haste, all endeavoured to make for it.

Crushing upon each other, hundreds were suffocated by the pressure; those that fell were trampled to death. Groans and screams "arose from earth to heaven in one wild shriek." Frantic cries for help, that none could render. Sounds of agony rent the air, thrilling with painfulest emotion through the breasts of all who, powerless to aid, were witnesses of this fearful scene. Many rushed desperately through the wall of flame that surrounded them as a funeral pyre, and, burnt and bleeding, found a terrible death in the excavations then making for the formation of the Rue Royale. A number of the police, scattered among the people in the enclosure, perished with them. In the fearful disorder that prevailed, they also, naturally, shared in the mad struggle for life. Nothing, in fact, could be done until the fire had burnt itself out, and the extent of the calamity was ascertained.

Then the dead were separated from the dying; the sufferings of the wounded and burnt attended to in the hospital, and convents, and nearest hôtels. In none, it is said, were sympathy, hospitality, and kind care more freely shown than in the hôtel of the Comtesse du Barry. The youthful couple, greatly distressed at so sad a disaster, gave their first year's allowance, which had just

been paid to them for their *menus plaisirs*, towards mitigating the misery that had fallen on many poor people. Few, indeed, failed to make an offering according to their means for the same charitable purpose.

But money, had it been more abundant and liberally forthcoming, could not avail to soothe to any great extent the wide-spread sorrow and suffering occasioned by this lamentable event. Neither the sufferers nor the survivors were all of the poorer class. Grief, deep and acute, prevailed in many a well-to-do household, from the sudden and terrible form of its bereavements.

The six weeks of frenzied dissipation, closing in "lamentation, mourning, and woe," seem to have been, as it were, a foreshadowing of the career of the frivolous, vain, and unfortunate Marie Antoinette, on whose account all these revels took place that were indirectly the cause of the sad catastrophe. In her after-life she was calumniated in her intentions, doubtless, though inexcusable in her conduct; which, worse than thoughtless, deserved censure, justified suspicion, and invited calumny. Some apology may be found for her errors in the earlier period of her life in her wretched bringing-up, and the trying position she was thrown into at an age scarcely beyond childhood, that of "*la première dame*" (the queen being dead) in the gayest, and, after that of Catherine of Russia, the most dissolute court in Europe.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Stanislaus Poniatowski. — Madame Geoffrin at Vienna. — L'Autrichienne. — Mesdames, the King's Daughters. — "Gros Madame." — L'Ingénue. — The Court of the Dauphine. — A Marriage on the Tapis. — "Nineveh Shall Be Overthrown." — The Candle Extinguished. — "Et Pourtant, il était à Fontenoy!"

WHEN Catherine II. placed Stanislaus Poniatowski on the throne of Poland, he wrote off to Madame Geoffrin, as soon as he was settled in his palace, "Maman, your son is a king. Come and see him." Poniatowski had been "formed" for his part in the *salon* of Madame Geoffrin. He was a philosopher, an admirer of Voltaire, and the friend of his disciples, d'Alembert, Marmontel, and Diderot. Proud of her brilliant *élève*, of his many accomplishments, and success in society, Madame Geoffrin was accustomed to call him her son. She paid the debts he contracted in Paris, and kept his pockets fairly supplied with loose cash.

That she had much regard for him appeared in the readiness with which she responded to his invitation. For it was her habit to live all the year round in the Rue St. Honoré, where, she

said, the air was good, and agreed with her, and that the trouble and fatigue of moving about did not. She was then nearly seventy, but, at the bidding of her adopted son, she, without delay, undertook the then arduous journey to Warsaw. Once fairly on her travels, the great event soon became known; and Madame Geoffrin, for whose extraordinary celebrity — unless derived from her reputation as "*la mère nourrice des philosophes*" — it is difficult to account, was entreated by the Empresses of Austria and Russia to visit Vienna and St. Petersburg.

Poniatowski received her with almost royal honours; and the magnificence, with which the fascinating *roué* — thanks to Russian bayonets — was then surrounded, greatly rejoiced the heart of his adopted mother. It was whispered about that Madame Geoffrin had not disdained to be the bearer of some political secret. But whether true or not, she was welcomed by Marie Thérèse with great cordiality, and entertained with much distinction. The wily empress drew from her flattered guest all possible information concerning the court of Versailles and the society of Paris. Her daughters were introduced, and the little Marie Antoinette, then between ten and eleven, greatly attracted Madame Geoffrin.

"*Voilà une petite archiduchesse charmante*," she said, taking the child on her lap. "How I should like to carry her away with me to Paris!"

"*Emportez, emportez,*" replied Marie Thérèse, laughingly.

"*Mais, je ne veux pas y aller,*" exclaimed the child; and, before she could be prevented, she escaped from the room.

When Madame Geoffrin returned, and reopened her *salon*, the account she gave of the incidents of her journey, and her visits to foreign courts, excited great interest. Soon after, it became known that a matrimonial alliance with Austria was on the *tapis*, and the lady who had seen the future Queen of France was visited and consulted as an oracle. As the answers of oracles are generally reputed to have been, so were those of Madame Geoffrin — vague, yet bearing the most favourable interpretation, and ultimately disappointing the hopes of the inquirer. It was said that Mesdames had privately conferred with her, and that to them she had spoken less vaguely. She had found the court of Vienna dull, to a degree that astonished her; the *grande politesse* of French society wanting, and the little archduchess in need of much "forming."

The king's four spinster daughters, of whom the youngest, Louise Marie (rather deformed, very ill-tempered, but very devout, and who took the veil at this time), was thirty-seven, and the eldest forty-three, possessed immense influence over the dauphin. Madame Adélaïde, who had some superstitious objection to an Austrian princess reign-

ing in France, was the first to use disdainfully the epithet "l'Autrichienne," to designate Marie Antoinette. To her mind it conveyed the idea of the absence of all the fascinations of *une française;* the utter want of *les belles manières* which distinguished the polished and *exigeante*, if corrupt, court of France. The slatternly, idle, and ill-behaved German girl was Madame Adélaïde's aversion, and she communicated her feelings to the dauphin, so far as his unimpressionable temperament was capable of receiving them.

Madame Adélaïde had forgotten her own youthful days, when, rough-mannered and boisterous, she might have been mistaken for a boy in petticoats. She scraped away lustily on a violin in those times, climbed trees, jumped over tables and chairs, and went through the soldiers' exercise, as far as she knew it, her great regret being that, as a girl, she could not "*conduire les tambours de papa roi.*" The king used then to call her his "*dragon.*" She had been on more friendly terms than the rest of the royal family with Madame de Pompadour. She and Madame and the king took their coffee together in the morning; the king, who excelled in such matters, always preparing it himself. Then there was Madame Victoire, who most resembled Louis XV., and whose deep blue eyes, like his own, had been greatly admired. Victoire was the daughter he called "Coche." Madame Sophie ("Graille") was third on the

list, and very like Marie Leczinska in features and kindly disposition.

There were yet two other Mesdames, in whom Marie Antoinette found more congenial companions, though a year or two younger than herself. They were the sisters of the dauphin, Madame Clotilde and Madame Elizabeth. The former was so enormously fat that she was familiarly known by the *sobriquet* of "Gros Madame." When, in 1777, she married the Prince de Piedmont, brother of the two princesses of Savoy, brides of Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois, the following epigram went the round of the *salons:*

"Le bon Savoyard qui reclame
Le prix de son double présent,
En échange reçoit Madame,
C'est le payer bien grassement."

One would have thought that when a *bagatelle* like this could interest and amuse society, more leniency would have been shown to the frivolities and silly remarks of a gay-hearted but ill-taught girl. But Marie Antoinette was disliked from the first. That Choiseul, who arranged the marriage, should, on her arrival, have been in disgrace, was a great disadvantage to her. Owing to her cruel and unmerited fate, she has been idealized into a vision of youthful beauty, grace and goodness. It is certain, however, that her manners were offensive, and her temper violent, needing constant

rebuke — and that when at Fontainebleau, in 1771, serious thoughts were entertained of seeking a divorce.

Marie Thérèse, so neglectful of essentials in the bringing up of her daughter, had been very careful to instruct her — with reference to Madame du Barry — "*qu'il fallait accepter les faits accomplis, et ménager la comtesse et, au besoin, la flatter,*" in order to be successful in her own views — flattering and pleasing Louis XV. Poor Marie Antoinette, on arriving at Versailles, began to act on this advice. Not having the art, of course, of so experienced a flatterer as the wily empress-queen, she occupied herself with Madame du Barry in a manner that offended both her and the king. The questions she put to Madame de Noailles, and her observations to others — repeated and laughed at until they had gone the round of the court and been considerably amplified on their progress — were not set down to the ingenuousness of an innocent girl. She played remarkably well, it was thought, the *rôle* of *ingénue;* much better, indeed, than they gave her credit, some years later on, for playing *soubrettes,* and other parts, in which she was so fond of exhibiting herself — acting and singing "*royalement mal,*" as those who flattered her most to her face were accustomed to say in her absence.

When, two years after, Monsieur and the Comte d'Artois married the young princesses of

Savoy, Marie Antoinette found life more genial and pleasant at Versailles. This party of married boys and girls became very intimate, formed themselves into a society apart, dined and supped in private together, with a small intimate circle of their own, composed of the youngest and most thoughtless of the court. They danced, and sang, and performed plays in secret, defying all the rules of etiquette, and often their revels led to desperate quarrels. The dauphin held himself much aloof from this vivacious coterie, of which the Comte d'Artois and the dauphine were the hero and heroine. Mesdames were horrified, absented themselves from the card-tables, which, as *la première dame de la cour* — a severe mortification to Madame Adélaïde — were now placed in the apartment of the dauphine. Madame, however, set up her own tables, carrying with her Madame de Noailles and all the elder ladies of the court, for they had discovered that they and their etiquette were subjects of jest and laughter in the rackety court of the dauphine.

At about this time Cardinal de Bernis made a journey to Rome, with a view of inducing the Pope to dissolve the marriage of Madame du Barry. Louis XV. had once told Choiseul that he would have no "Dame de Maintenon" at his court. It now appeared that he had changed his mind, and contemplated a *mariage à main gauche* with Madame du Barry. Her husband, Count

Guillaume du Barry, had obligingly furthered his views, and a "Séparation de corps et de bien" was pronounced by the *tribunaux*. But the little fat cardinal failed in his mission to Rome. Not that his holiness was unwilling to yield to the behest of his most Christian majesty; but the marriage of Madame du Barry being legally recognized, the Church, it was said, had not the power to dissolve it.

The difficulty, notwithstanding, would probably have been overcome at no distant date had not the king been attacked by a fatal disease which unexpectedly brought his inglorious career to an end.

On the 27th April, 1774, as Louis XV. was on his road to the hunt in the forest of St. Germain, he and his party came in contact with a funeral procession. The road being narrow, they drew aside to allow it to pass. In reply to inquiries, they were informed that it was the funeral of a young person who had died of the small-pox. The king was supposed to have had this disease in his childhood, a slight eruption, from which he entirely recovered, after an indisposition of a few days, having been mistaken for it. When, therefore, he was taken ill, on the 30th of April, his physicians, having no suspicion of small-pox, at once bled him freely. Continuing to grow worse, and the nature of his disease becoming developed in its most malignant form, precautions were taken for

isolating the young princes and princesses, who, with the exception of the dauphine, had not had the small-pox.

In one of the Lenten sermons, two or three weeks before, the Bishop of Senez, M. de Beauvais, had taken for his text, when preaching before the king, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown." A stirring discourse, in which Paris and its dissolute society were compared to Nineveh and its inhabitants, and coming retribution foretold, had caught the conscience of the king. He could not get the subject out of his thoughts, and was anxious for the end of these forty Lenten days. Madame du Barry, to whom he communicated his fears, was no less so, being extremely superstitious; while the aged libertine, Richelieu, laughed at them both, and endeavoured to cheer the king. Two hundred thousand *francs* were given to the poor and for prayers to Ste. Geneviève, but without avail. Whether or not it be true, as asserted by some French writers, that Louis XV. really regarded the bishop's sermon as prophetic, and having relation to himself, it is singular that on the fortieth day after its delivery he was conveyed to St. Denis for burial, as ignominiously as his predecessor had been near sixty years before. His three daughters, who remained with him in his illness, took the disease, but recovered, though with its disfiguring traces piteous to see. Sev-

eral of his attendants died; and the lives of two or three priests, whose duty it was to watch by this mass of corruption during the night, were sacrificed also.

The youthful royal family, assembled in a distant apartment, anxiously awaited the signal of death, the extinguishing of a candle in the window of the king's bedcamber. At last the light disappears. All preparations have been made for departure. The carriage that is to convey them to Choisy stands ready at the entrance, the horses and servants anxious as themselves to set off. They are rather subdued, these six young people, but, on the whole, far from sad; for a lively remark of the Comtesse d'Artois, on the oddness of the manner of their journey, breaks the spell, elicits a hearty laugh from the whole party, and at once there is an end to their mourning.

The body of the king was put in a coffin and covered with lime. The first conveyance at hand was brought forth, and the coffin thrust into it. Twenty attendants, in their ordinary dress, without sign of mourning, followed with torches, and the procession set out for St. Denis "*au grand trot*," as Besenval says in his graphic, and probably the most trustworthy, account of the illness and death of Louis XV.

Those who encountered this funeral convoy saluted it with an imprecation, or a handful of

mud. Not a soul regretted this worthless king. But a veteran soldier shouldered his musket and saluted as the procession passed out of the gates of Versailles, in the dead of the night, on the 13th of May, 1774. "*Et pourtant*," murmured the old soldier, regretfully, "*il était à Fontenoy !*"

CHAPTER XXIV.

The Last Lettre-de-Cachet. — "Les Droits de l'Homme." — "La Couronne me Gêne." — The Young King and Queen. — The Queen's Coiffeur. — Hurrying on to Perdition. — Visits to Luviciennes. — The Duc de Cossé-Brissac. — Voltaire's Return to Paris. — Voltaire's Reception. — Death of Lekain. — Les Femmes Philosophes. — France Crowns Voltaire. — Death of Voltaire. — L'Île des Peupliers. — The End of the Old Régime.

"BEAU RÈGNE *qui commence par une lettre-de-cachet*," said Madame du Barry, when, with the politest of bows, the Duc de La-Vrillière presented himself at Ruel, whither she had retired at the request of the late king, and handed her the order to repair forthwith to the Abbaye of Pont-aux-Dames. Had she known what was taking place beyond court circles, she would have said "*qui termine*," rather than "*qui commence*." For La-Vrillière — who had grown old at the head of the "Administration des Lettres-de-Cachet," having "never had the honour," as Madame de Pompadour said, "of being dismissed from that post" — very shortly after found that his occupation was gone.

He had been in the habit of furnishing those letters to his mistress, Madame de Sabatin, in lieu of the ample sum she needed for pin-money. Any one, therefore, desirous of quietly getting rid of a husband, brother, or father, wife or daughters, had but to make a present to Madame de Sabatin. One of the last — perhaps the very last — *lettre-de-cachet* issued by royal command, was that which recommended the *maîtresse-en-titre* of Louis XV. to seclude herself for awhile in the retreat pointed out to her. The people would submit to no more of these iniquities; and although, at times, in the succeeding reign, a refractory noble was invited to reside at his estate, he usually declined the invitation, now that it was not made by letter. France had accepted the oft-repeated *mot* of Louis XV., "*Après nous le déluge;*" accepted it as a consolatory truth, as a guarantee, over and above its own secret resolve, that the state of things then existing under him should come to an end with his reign. The tottering *vieille monarchie*, and the effete *ancien régime*, were therefore buried together in the unhonoured tomb of "Louis, le Bien-aimé," and the nation looked forward with hope to the expected reforms of the new reign.

The many startling events of that reign, the impolitic acts of the weak but well-intentioned king, the censurable ones of his thoughtless and frivolous queen, can of course be only referred to,

and that in the briefest possible manner, in the few concluding pages of this volume.

The old *régime* was at an end, an entire change of scene at hand, and "Les droits de l'homme," in the philosophic sense, were about to be loudly asserted. "I see the seeds of a revolution everywhere scattering around me," said Voltaire — "a revolution that will, in due season, unfailingly arrive, though I shall not have the pleasure of witnessing it. There will then be a fine *tapage*. The young people are lucky indeed; they will see wonderful doings. The French are tardy in all things, but in the end they attain their objects." Such was the situation of affairs and the feeling of the country when Louis XVI., not yet twenty years of age, utterly ignorant of the routine of government and business of state, and giving no evidence of the possession of qualities for successfully coping with the difficulties of the position he was entering upon, was crowned at Rheims.

The crown being placed rather uncomfortably on his head, "*Elle me gêne*," he said. Those present who heard his remark were struck by it as an unfavourable omen — for this atheistical and philosophical age was remarkably superstitious. Henri III. had said on a similar occasion, "*Elle me pique*." Was there possibly a fate similar to his in reserve for Louis XVI.? Who could tell? Yet the similitude of his remark seemed a presage of evil. On the other hand, hopes

were high with a portion of the Parisians. Though hitherto a nullity, whom no one had thought of, what was now reported of his private life and principles was encouraging, and the hopes and expectations of his people were made known to him, as he passed through Paris, by the word "RESURREXIT," placed conspicuously in large characters on the statue of Henri IV. The young king was affected. "*Ah! quelle belle parole*," he exclaimed, with emotion.

With new responsibilities, and positions more prominent and assured, the different characters of the king and his brothers became more fully developed. The incapacity of Louis XVI. was very soon patent to both court and people. "*Son âme*," says Sainte-Beuve, "*se dérobait de son rôle de roi par ses vertus mêmes.*" He was sincerely pious, truly kind and humane; but there was nothing brilliant or attractive in him, either intellectually or personally. The queen, for some years, though she interfered greatly in affairs of state, and intrigued to establish her favourites in influential posts, had no influence with the king. He was guided, unfortunately for him, by the Comte de Maurepas, who had been twenty-three years banished from the court, and was recalled, to be the confidential minister of an inexperienced king, at the suggestion of Mesdames. The tastes and pursuits of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. were wholly dissimilar. He was methodical in his

habits, moderate in his expenditure, and his recreations were of the soberest kind. The queen was incapable of giving her mind to any but the most frivolous occupations. She passed her time like a professional actress — her only study, the part she was to sing or play in the afternoon or evening. Or she was rehearsing with the actor Dazincourt, who instructed her in her favourite *rôles — les soubrettes;* or inventing with Mdlle. Guimard new *toilettes;* or head-dresses of the most ridiculous extravagance in height and breadth. Leonard, her *coiffeur*, could put from ten to twenty yards of gauze in a lady's head-dress; a damask table-cloth, or — as he once elegantly introduced into a *coiffure* — a lady's cambric chemise.

Marie Antoinette grew considerably during the four years that elapsed from her marriage to the death of Louis XV. When she came to the throne, she was about the middle height. Her figure had improved, though, from her lounging, careless habits, she had been bandaged and compressed, to prevent one shoulder growing out. Her long neck now carried her head very gracefully, and without being either *belle ou jolie*, as her confidential friend, Besenval, tells us, the expression of her features was agreeable when she was in a good humour. This was not too often the case, it appears. The quarrels, and scenes of violence, among the youthful royal family are lamentable to read of. The Comtesse de Provence

had the intensest dislike to the queen, and her husband shared her feeling.

Her midnight rambles with the Comte d'Artois; their *bals de l'opéra;* their visits to Ramponeau's *guinguette,* in the Courtille des Porcherons; the queen's confessed enjoyment of the Shrove Tuesday saturnalia at the latter low place of amusement, as well as the extraordinary indiscretions that gave rise to calumnious reports against her, are all too well known. The letters of the Comte de Mercy d'Argenteau have revealed nothing new; but they have confirmed much that before was deemed doubtful. The affair of the necklace; Beaumarchais's calumny; the sensation created by his "Marriage of Figaro," and the queen's performance of Susanna — all these things, and many similar ones, are also familiar.

While the queen was "hurrying on to perdition," as the empress, her mother, wrote to her, Madame du Barry was holding her court at Luviciennes. She had won golden opinions from the nuns of the Abbaye of Pont-aux-Dames. And when, at the end of a year and a half, she wrote to Maurepas, that "if she had ever known any of the secrets of state, she had now entirely forgotten them," he replied that all things should have an end. That she was at liberty to return to Luviciennes, and to visit Paris whenever she pleased. "Her *douceur* and *gentillesse* had been remarkable," he said, "and he was glad she had

thought so well of him as to make her application to him." He had also to inform her that the king was pleased to grant her a pension of two thousand *écus*.

The pension was certainly *de trop*. Madame du Barry was wealthy. Her château and grounds were a kind of *petit paradis*, and, like the Duc de Choiseul in his exile at Chanteloup, she had always a circle of friends around her. The Duc de Deux-Ponts sent his minister to bid her remember that there was always a safe retreat, with a warm reception, awaiting her in his domains. The King of Sweden, Gustave III., went to her, and made a similar offer, and Joseph II., when in France, spent a whole day at Luviciennes. The gardens are said to have been beautiful. With Madame du Barry on his arm, the emperor visited all the wonders of her little paradise. When she expressed her gratitude for his kind attentions to "*une pauvre récluse*," "*Madame*," he replied, "*la beauté est toujours reine, et son empire le monde entier.*"

The romantic devotion of the Duc de Cossé-Brissac — governor of Paris and Colonel of the Cent-gardes du Roi — to Madame du Barry is singular. For ten years, until he fell a victim to the revolution, he paid her a sort of passionate worship; such as, in the old romances of chivalry, gallant knights were supposed to render to the ladies to whom they had sworn fealty. He had

made a will providing for her, and recommending her to the care of his daughter as "*une personne qui lui était bien chère.*" He had foreseen what troubles were coming on France; the probability of his own death, and of distress falling on her; but he had not anticipated, it would seem, that the guillotine would claim her also as its victim. The duke was beheaded not far from Luviciennes, and his bleeding head thrown into her apartment.

But before the revolution had deluged France with blood, and when only the first distant mutterings of the coming storm were heard, the aged philosopher who for sixty years "*faisait une guerre implacable aux préjugés,*" was desirous of once again visiting the capital, from which he had for twenty-eight years been banished. In 1777 he had sent his tragedy of "Irène" to the Théâtre Français, and some misconception of the characters on the part of the actors had considerably annoyed him. Patience in such matters was not one of his virtues. He had therefore a further inducement to undertake the journey in his wish to have his tragedy rehearsed under his own eyes. His niece, the Marquise de Villette, recently married at Fernay, but now settled in Paris, urged him also to come and to make her house his home.

Accompanied by Madame Denis, he imprudently left Fernay at the beginning of February, in weather of extremest severity. The greatest attention was paid him on the road, and every pre-

caution taken by the post-masters and others to ensure his safety and comfort. He arrived in Paris on the 10th of February, 1778. He was enveloped in a large loose pelisse of crimson velvet, with a small gold cording at the edges, and deeply bordered with sable. His travelling cap was also of velvet and fur. It was carnival time, and a party of *polissons*, on the look-out for masks, mistook poor old Voltaire for a carnival reveller, and pursued him for a considerable distance. In spite of fatigue and the inclemency of the weather, he was no sooner out of his carriage than he set off on foot to the residence of his *cher ange*, Le Comte d'Argental, who returned with him to the house of M. de Villette.

As soon as it was known that Voltaire was in Paris, it occasioned an immense stir and commotion amongst the clergy, the philosophers, and the court; and indeed amongst persons of all classes. "Voltaire was again among them!" He who had made it the business of his life to uproot what he conceived to be error, whose feelings and opinions, whether absent or present, had a predominating influence in France — his name was on every one's lips; his arrival the one subject of conversation, and all eagerly desired to see him.

He rose at seven on the following morning to receive the Prince de Beauvau and two other academicians deputed to welcome him. The rest of "the forty" soon followed. D'Alembert, La

Harpe, and the philosophic brotherhood were also among the first to offer their felicitations to their master and the patriarch of the sect. The French comedians arrived in a body to pay homage to him, and later in the day they rehearsed "Irène" before him, as he lay in bed, whither the fatigue of his early reception at last compelled him to retire. Mdlle. Clairon, in her enthusiasm, fell on her knees before him, he, unfortunately, being now too old and stiff to do, as in such cases he had ever been wont to do.

On the 12th, Voltaire was informed of the death of Lekain, and was so much affected by it that he remained, for two or three days, in strict seclusion. Meanwhile, courtiers, ministers, men of letters, and all persons of distinction in the capital, including many of the clergy, paid visits of congratulation, or made anxious inquiries concerning his health. But he was not received at Versailles, and it was rumoured that the Archbishop of Paris had entreated the king to order him to retire from the capital. But the vivacious old poet made light of these marks of disrespect, and astonished his admirers by his gaiety and the "*prodigieuse légèreté*" of his conversation. The learned Madame Necker paid her respects to him; also Benjamin Franklin, then in Paris with his nephew, whom he presented to Voltaire and asked his blessing upon him. He replied by exclaiming in English, and in a loud voice (for he

was almost delirious with excitement), "Liberty, Tolerance, and Probity!" The young Abbé de Perigord (Talleyrand) also craved the benediction, "*de celui qui avait 'ôté aux Nations le bandeau de l'erreur.'*" Amongst other celebrities, Madame du Barry is said to have visited him. To her great amusement — having exhausted his *répertoire* of gallant speeches — he addressed her as "*votre divinité.*" "*La mère nourrice des philosophes*" was not spared to witness this apotheosis of Voltaire. She had died in the previous year; also Mdlle. d'Espinasse. Only Madame du Deffant still lived; but her *salon* was closed. She was about the same age as Voltaire, but far less vivacious — inhabiting an apartment in the Convent of St. Joseph, and while waiting for her summons from this world occasionally turning her thoughts towards another — nothing now being left to this *femme philosophe* and *esprit fort*, but, as she wrote herself, "*La peur de l'éternité.*"

The sixteenth representation of "Irène" was about to take place. Voltaire, from his exertions in instructing the actors in their parts, had been compelled to keep his bed. Finding himself somewhat better, he determined on witnessing the performance of his play. The theatre was crowded to excess. When he entered the box reserved for him — that of the gentlemen of the bedchamber — the whole of the audience rose and cheered him vociferously. A cry, "Let him be

crowned," was taken up and repeated in all parts of the house. Voltaire bowed his thanks, but would have declined the proffered honour, nothing of that kind having before been attempted in France. But the audience persisted, exclaiming — as Buzard, who played the High Priest in "Irène," advanced with a laurel crown — "*C'est le public; c'est la France qui l'envoie.*" He then yielded to their wishes.

The tragedy being ended, and while the audience were waiting for the after-piece, the curtain unexpectedly rose, revealing the whole of the company of comedians grouped around the bust of Voltaire, elevated on a pedestal in the centre of the stage. Madame Vestris, who had played Irène, then advanced, and recited an ode addressed to the poet, whose name was chanted at certain intervals by the rest of the company, each of whom held a laurel wreath in his hand. The ode ended, the actors and actresses, passing separately before the bust, placed their wreaths upon it, the audience meanwhile applauding with frenzied enthusiasm.

Poor Voltaire, greatly overcome by this scene, was carried almost fainting from the theatre, preceded by an excited throng, hailing him as the Sophocles and Homer of France.

Arrived at the hôtel of M. de Villette, the courtyard was found crowded with his friends and people of distinction, to offer their congratulations on his recovery and the triumphal reception he

had just met with. Turning towards them, he thanked them in a tone of unusual emotion for the honours heaped upon him, and, he added, "*de la gloire sous laquelle je vais expirer.*"

It was his last public appearance. He kept his bed for some days, and, being more composed, Madame Denis, his niece, was proposing to return with him to Fernay. But excitement, so continued, had brought his feeble frame to the gates of death. He rallied slightly, was feverish and impatient. A large dose of opium threw him into a lethargy. Momentarily he was roused by the news that the name of Lally-Tolandal was freed from the disgrace cast upon it by the ignominious and unjust death he had suffered on the scaffold. A gleam of pleasure passed over his countenance, "*Je meurs content,*" he said. "*Je vois que le roi est juste.*"

His body was embalmed, and conveyed at night to the Convent of Sellières. Before the bishop, who had intended to prevent his burial, could issue his order to that effect, the ceremony had been performed. His heart was enclosed in an urn, and placed by M. de Villette in the chamber he had used as his study. The urn bore this inscription — "*Son cœur est ici, son esprit partout.*"

Thus ended the long career of Voltaire — "*l'homme qui avait dominé son siècle.*"

Rousseau — "*celui qui l'avait agité*" — shortly

followed him. In July of the same year — either dying by his own hand, or suddenly struck down by apoplexy — Jean Jacques's troubles, discontents, and imaginary wrongs were brought to a close at the retreat M. de Girardin had provided him with at Ermenonville. He was buried there on a small island, l'Île des Peupliers. On the tomb raised to his memory by M. de Girardin was inscribed, "*Ici repose l'homme de la nature et la vérité.*"

Through the summer of 1778, it was the fashion to make the "*pélerinage philosophique*" to the tomb of Jean Jacques. Marie Antoinette visited it, Madame du Barry also — "Le Devin du Village" being performed on their return, at their private theatres. Later in the year, when Monsieur le Comte de Provence was hunting in the Capitainerie de Chantilly, the hounds pursued the stag to the Île des Peupliers; and "without, at the time, being aware of it," said Monsieur, "the animal was killed on the tomb of *l'homme de la nature.*"

How the remains of Voltaire and Rousseau were disturbed by the monsters of the revolution is well known. How liberty degenerated into licence, and how Louis XVI. and his queen from weakness to weakness, from folly to folly, too rapidly, and too surely, hurried on to their fate, are facts no less familiar to every one.

Here, then, we leave them, with feelings of pity and sympathy; for the fate of Louis XVI. was due

far more to the despotism and depravity of his predecessors than to political mistakes and faults of his own. Both he and his queen may, in fact, be regarded as the scapegoats of the vices of the Old Régime.

THE END.

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